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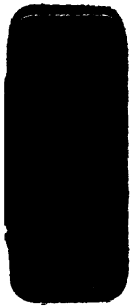

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Three short raps upon the window pane.
Frontispiece

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GIRLS OF '64

BY

EMILIE BENSON KNIPE

AND

ALDEN ARTHUR KNIPE

Authors of "A Maid of '76," "Polly Trotter, Patriot," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

EMILIE BENSON KNIPE

New York

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1918

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GIRLS OF '64

CHAPTER I

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

CORINNE twisted and turned before the mirror over the console table, flicked a speck of powder from her sacque and stood back to regard herself appreciatively. She felt her toilette to be extremely distinguished when war deprivations were taken into account.

"I'm ready," she drawled, addressing her cousin. "If we-all don't want to be late we might as well start. It's 'most train-time."

Harriot settled back in her chair and began to rock furiously.

"I don't think I'll go to the dêpot to-day," she said finally.

Corinne looked at her indignantly.

"What did you let me take all the trouble to powder my nose for then?" she demanded. "You know ma won't let me go alone in that crowd, and there's sure to be some news."

"Oh, bother the news!" Harriot murmured under her breath, unconsciously turning her head to look in the direction of the kitchen.

"Harriot May!" cried Corinne disapprovingly, "you speak as if you didn't care about the victories of our great Confederacy."

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"But they aren't always victories," Harriot returned bluntly. "That's the trouble. We're just as apt to hear that the hateful Yankees have beaten us again and — and besides, I'd rather stay here, anyhow." Once more she turned an eye toward the cooking-quarters and sniffed.

"You're not thinking of eating again?" Corinne demanded.

"Yes, I am," Harriot answered blandly. "Aunt Decent's going to make corn meal poundcake and if we hang 'round the kitchen she'll bake us each a little patty-pan."

"You're such a child," Corinne said, with the patronizing smile fifteen bestows upon twelve; but if she expected Harriot to resent her grown-up airs she must have been disappointed. The "child" suddenly jumped to her feet as a faint odor of baking drifted into the room.

"Come on, Corinne!" she insisted, "Aunt Decent is taking the first pan out of the oven now. Besides, I'll coax her to give us some cush to feed Saretta's baby. She's sure to be there after clabber."

Corinne followed, still protesting; but cakes were not so plentiful in the South during this, the second year of the war, that even a girl who preferred to think herself very much of a young lady could afford to scorn them.

"Well, the train's always late anyway," she murmured indulgently, as if in excuse for letting her cousin have her own way.

Led by Harriot the two went toward the kitchen by a circuitous route as if they had just happened to pass by. Outside the door was a group of colored mothers and orphan-tenders, awaiting the special rations which were doled out to little babies,

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and among them was Saretta with Aunt Decent's newest grandchild in her arms. Harriot, wise in the management of the dusky autocrat, said nothing of patty-pans until she had stuffed the baby. Then she broached the subject tentatively.

"Land sakes, but you is the eatin'est child!" Aunt Decent exclaimed heartily, and that was sufficient assurance that there would be a special portion of the coveted poundcake for the two girls.

"I wish I had gone over to the Polks. Cousin Sally would have walked to the dêpot with me," Corinne hinted with conscious cunning. Harriot, who had no other cousins in Georgia, was decidedly jealous of Corinne's many relatives.

"I'll go to the dêpot with you now," Harriot said good-naturedly. "Not that I care anything about your old train," she added, as they started off.

"Its arrival is the only thing that ever happens in this stupid little town," Corinne snapped.

"Maybe," Harriot agreed, "but how any one can enjoy seeing a crowd of ladies in black silk Talmas covered with dust, is more than I can understand."

"There are the wounded officers," Corinne suggested, a trifle self-consciously.

"Yes, all trying to look interesting," Harriot answered, with more than a trace of scorn in her tone.

Corinne regarded her askance for a moment.

"What in the world has come over you to-day?" she asked. "That's no way to speak of our heroes. If you weren't my very own cousin —"

"Well, I am," Harriot interrupted, "and I'm just as much for the South as any one."

"More so than some, I hope," Corinne interrupted in her turn.

Harriot stopped short in her tracks.

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"If you say a word about mother being a Submissionist, I'll never speak to you again," she threatened seriously.

"I wasn't going to mention Aunt Parthenia," Corinne asserted, but the younger girl shook her head as if she were not so sure of this.

"Just because mother didn't think we should have seceded doesn't make her a traitor to the South," she continued earnestly. "Besides, April is rebel enough for a whole family."

The girls walked on again in silence. They had touched upon a delicate subject, and Corinne, with unusual good sense, held her tongue until they reached the railroad shed where the expected train was just coming to a stop.

A large crowd had already gathered to hear the latest news of the outside world. Because the mails were seriously interrupted and few newspapers were published in the South, the people of the towns and villages were almost wholly dependent upon the information to be picked up from travelers; so, for miles about the little town of Washington, Georgia, the inhabitants of the district drove or rode in to meet the daily train.

This particular afternoon there was an unusually large crowd clustered around the wheezy engine with its string of shabby coaches.

"More wounded," Harriot whispered, nodding toward a number of flat cars attached to the end of the train.

"I don't think so," Corinne answered, a little excitedly. "They're filled with ladies and gentlemen, and there's something going on. Let's get closer."

They elbowed their way through the press until they came within earshot of a Confederate officer,

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who was speaking to the assemblage. His arm was in a sling and over his shoulders he had a faded blanket shawl which, with his threadbare gray uniform, gave him a most dilapidated appearance. But his audience, well used to the sight of ragged soldiers, listened with marked attention to his words.

"It has as much force as a soap-bubble," the officer was saying as the girls came within sound of his voice. "Just suppose Abe Lincoln took it into his head that it was wrong to keep birds in cages. And then suppose he issued a proclamation to France ordering her to open all her cage doors and let out the birds. Does anybody think France would pay any attention to it? Of course not! They would insist, first of all, that the birds would starve if they were let out. Secondly, they would say it was none of Lincoln's business and, lastly, they would know, just as we know, that the birds don't want their freedom."

"What has Abe Lincoln to do with French birds?" Harriot whispered.

"Hush!" Corinne admonished her, straining her ears to catch the next words.

"Well, my friends," the officer went on, "that's the way it is with this Emancipation Proclamation. You know, and I know, that our servants don't want to be free. They wouldn't know what to do with freedom if they had it — and it's none of Abe Lincoln's business anyway! What authority has he over our great Confederacy? Not that much!" and he snapped his fingers with a fine gesture of indifference. "No more than he has over France. For two years he has been trying to beat us and now, ladies and gentlemen, he's getting desperate. This proclamation is his last move to scare us. He knows at last that Cotton is King. And, let me tell

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you, the Knights of the Golden Circle are not idle. The North is about ready to give up. This proclamation doesn't amount —"

The train gave a jerk and, starting off, put an end to his oratory. The crowd cheered as the passenger cars moved slowly away to carry the news to the next stopping-place along the line.

But there was a lack of heartiness in the shouts of applause, and a rather silent group of people hurried toward their homes. Men looked at each other with sober faces and shook their heads somewhat doubtfully.

"I'm going straight back to ma," said Corinne, as the two girls turned to retrace their steps.

"But the patty-pans!" Harriot exclaimed. "They'll be done by the time we get home."

"Save mine till to-morrow," Corinne answered. "Ma's sure to want to talk to Aunt Parthenia in the morning, and I'll come over with her."

The Stewarts and the Mays lived at opposite ends of the town so that the girls separated immediately. Harriot, thinking of corn meal poundcake, hurried to the cook-house. Perhaps because she feared to be tempted, she put Corinne's portion out of sight at once, then munching her own share, went in search of her mother.

She had not been at all impressed by the harangue she had heard at the station. That sort of speech-making was no new thing to her, and she had failed wholly to grasp the significance of what the Confederate officer had said. Nevertheless she knew that her mother would be interested in any news arriving by the train and was ready enough to report what she had heard.

The town house of the May family was a spacious building. On one side of a wide hall were the

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parlors. On the other were the breakfast and state dining-rooms. Back of these were various offices for the administration of the estates. At each end of the dining-room, looms for homespun had been set up; for the many slaves, both in town and on the plantations, had to be clothed as well as fed. It was here that Mrs. May spent the greater portion of her days at this time of year. The spinning-wheels humming made an accompaniment to the clang of the battens; and several old colored women, wearing gay bandanas, bent their heads over a basket of cotton which had just been brought in. Aunt Decent's daughter Isabel was busily carding and near the great fire-place Jim's Jimmy was standing. It was his business to keep the fire going, and the heat made the child so drowsy that he was not allowed to sit down, for fear he would fall sound asleep and tumble into the flames.

As Harriot entered the room, Mrs. May stepped back and forth following her thread before the loom, with a slow grace that brought to mind pictures of stately minuets that might have been danced in years past upon the very floor over which she moved so lightly.

"You're just in time, my dear," she called, catching sight of Harriot. "I need some one to reel thread into hanks for me."

Harriot set to work willingly.

"I've just come back from the dêpot," she began, once the task was well started. "There were a lot of people there to-day."

"What news did you hear?" asked Mrs. May.

"Oh, nothing much," Harriot replied. "There was an officer made a speech about birds in cages and freedom and France. He was wounded in the arm, but people didn't seem to care about what he

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said. At least they didn't cheer nearly as much as I've heard sometimes."

"Was it about the fighting?" Mrs. May's tone was anxious, for she had both a husband and a son in the Confederate army.

"No," drawled Harriot, "it wasn't interesting. It was all about old Abe Lincoln and a Proclam —"

"Harriot," Mrs. May interrupted abruptly, "suppose you run upstairs to April and see if you can't help her with her hair. She's to take supper at Pettigrew's."

"But mother," Harriot began, surprised at this unusual request.

"Run along, honey," her mother insisted. "And send Merry down to me."

Somewhat puzzled, Harriot left the busy room and ran to the floor above, entering her sister's chamber without ceremony to find April standing, slight, fair and very beautiful, while her brown maid, Merry, laced her stays. Her wonderful blond hair had already been woven into an intricate crown, and, at sight of it, Harriot flopped into a chair.

"Mother wants Merry," she announced. "Don't ask me why, 'cause I don't know."

April regarded her young sister for a moment without speaking.

"Mother said I was to help with your hair. I knew you wouldn't let me touch your precious yellow wig," Harriot went on. "But it wasn't a bit of use my telling her that. I suppose I might just as well go down again."

"If mother sent you up here, you'd better stay," April remarked knowingly. "Merry can go as soon as I'm laced."

"All right," agreed the good-natured Harriot, "though I don't see why —. Mammy says you'll

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have a red nose 'sho' as you'he bohn' if you wear your things so tight."

"And she says you won't have 'a toof in yoh haid' if you eat so much poundcake," April retorted with a laugh. "You can go down to Old Miss, Merry," she added to the maid.

But the door had hardly closed upon Merry when April turned a serious face to her sister.

"What were you blabbing that made mother send you up here?" she demanded.

Harriot was genuinely surprised and injured.

"Not one earthly thing," she declared stoutly. "Corinne and I went to the dêpot to hear the news and I had just begun to tell mother about it. I didn't say a thing in the world."

"What is the news?" April inquired anxiously. "Has Rosecrans —"

"I tell you I didn't hear a thing about the war," Harriot insisted, much aggrieved. "If I had, it isn't a crime to mention it, is it? Besides, I'd only begun when mother sent me up to you. There was a man talking about Abe Lincoln and a proclamation, letting the birds free or something. I didn't understand much of it."

"What have Abe Lincoln's proclamation to do with us?" said April sharply, more to herself than to her sister.

At that moment Mrs. May came into the room, closing the door carefully behind her.

"I have no doubt the proclamation is the promised emancipation of the slaves, honey," she suggested quietly, having overheard April's question. "I didn't wish it mentioned before the women downstairs. There is no use unsettling the quarters yet. But they'll learn of it fast enough; for, from now on, the negroes are free."

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"Mother!" exclaimed April passionately, "how can you say such things? What does the South care for Lincoln's proclamation? And as for the slaves — they'll do as they're bid. They know they can't escape the hounds just because a miserable Yankee says they're free."

Mrs. May looked at her beautiful daughter in silence for a moment, shaking her head gently. When she spoke it was with a note of sadness in her voice.

"It hurts me to hear you talk like that, my child, even though I know you don't mean it. You are no more capable of sending the hounds after one of our people than I am."

"Oh, well, our servants will never leave us," April replied with deep conviction. "What difference does this proclamation make to us? Mr. Davis is the President of our country, not Abe Lincoln."

"I'm afraid you don't understand, dear," Mrs. May replied patiently. "As I see it, this proclamation gives the Confederacy its death-blow. England, which has been seizing slave ships and fighting slavery for many years, cannot side with the South in this war when slavery is made the open issue. Without her aid what shall we do? You know how short we are already of necessities. If England refuses to supply us, how can we go on?"

"Oh, but, mother, we must beat them," April cried. "We shall find a way."

"Honey," Mrs. May went on earnestly, "I want to prepare you for what is coming. Remember how rapidly our resources are dwindling and —"

"Our soldiers are the bravest in the world," April broke in vehemently. "The Yankees can never beat them!"

"That may be true," her mother admitted, "but they cannot fight without powder for their guns.

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Think of the shifts we are already put to. Your father has just written me to have the smoke-house floor dug up and boiled for the salt that may be obtained. There is talk of sacrificing the tobacco crop to get the niter in it. Wool is so precious that it is against the law to kill a sheep — and look!" she went on, holding out her slender hands stained with dyes. "In order to barely clothe our people I must work as I never expected to in my life. Of that I do not complain, but do you not see that this cannot go on indefinitely? For a year or two we may manage to exist; but the end is certain. I want you to realize it, my child."

April trembled for a moment and then with a brave toss of her head she lifted her eyes to her mother's.

"I'm going to a party and I shan't cry," she insisted, struggling with the emotions that threatened to bring hot tears. "We're obliged to win! We just must! I'll wear Georgia jeans — I'll starve for the cause. I would die for it, mother, if it would help us to win!"

It was not sheer bravado that had brought forth this explosion. April was quite sincere in what she said. The cause of the South was right and holy in her eyes and she was ready to meet, with cheerfulness, any sacrifice that might be demanded of her. To doubt for a moment a successful issue of the struggle seemed to her like a confession of disloyalty.

This her mother well understood, but she also had a fuller realization of the issues at stake and the resources of the contending forces.

"My darling April," she said gently, "I don't want to spoil your party but it is better that you should learn from me what this proclamation means to the South. You will surely hear more of it to-

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night, but now it will not come to you as a bitter surprise. Let us drop the matter for the present and I'll help you into this," she continued, picking up from the bed a skirt of ruffled pink tarleton. "Harry, light more candles. We'll be extravagant for once and take a good look at sister in all her finery. It may be the last to run the blockade."

Harriot sprang to her feet to light an improvised candle which consisted of a corncob wrapped with a twisted wick dipped in resin and wax. As there were no matches to be had she was forced to kindle it from the small fire burning on the hearth.

But, as she stooped, April shook her head decidedly.

"No, Harry, don't," she cried, crossing the room hurriedly. "Just set the logs blazing and you shall see me by fire-light and so save our candles. I'm beginning to realize what is the matter with us-all of the South. We're ready enough with fine words or big brave deeds, but we neglect the little things and so waste our resources. From now on, I mean to make the small sacrifices that are needed. If we all do that, we shall be able to endure to the end and win!"

April was barely seventeen, but she spoke with a fresh spirit of resolution and sincerity, and there was a thoughtfulness in her beautiful face that gave it a look of dawning maturity.

"And I'll do my share, too!" Harriot exclaimed, carried away by her sister's enthusiasm. "I can do it, if April can. Hereafter I'll not eat so much poundcake — and I'll see that Corinne doesn't, either."

Mrs. May smiled a little sadly, wishing, perhaps, that this willingness to accept privations had been born of faith in another and better cause.

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CHAPTER II

A STRANGE GUEST

THE year 1863, which was ushered in by the Emancipation Proclamation, was one of steadily waning fortune for the Confederate Cause. Even temporary successes in Virginia or elsewhere could hardly blind the South to such blows as the loss of Vicksburg and the Union victory of Gettysburg. Hope flared up after Chickamauga, but 1864 opened with no better prospect than had 1863, and resources dwindled steadily. Food became so scarce that many were actually near the starvation point. In the State of Georgia, however, which, as yet, the war had touched but lightly, there was comparative plenty, and the people of little Washington, though they were forced to give up many seeming necessities, lived in tolerable comfort.

Thus Mrs. May's predictions apparently were far from fulfillment, and April's conviction of the ultimate victory of the South was strengthened. Moreover, Georgia crops were counted upon to feed the army, and this kept men at home in legitimate employment and the life of the community took on a semblance of what it was in normal times. Officers on recruiting service or attached to the military prisons at Andersonville and Millen, were to be seen everywhere; so that there was no lack of escorts for ladies, who never stirred out of their native towns without a gentleman in attendance.

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There was a continual round of parties and balls which, though they lacked the lavishness of former occasions, were gay and lively in spite of conditions that might well have depressed a less sanguine people.

And, as was natural, there was no hint upon the part of the soldiers that victory for the Southern arms was in the slightest degree doubtful. The gallant captains and lieutenants who, with the courtly grace of their time, bowed low over the dainty hands of their fair partners in the dance, never failed to promise success with so sincere a conviction that those who listened thereafter turned a deaf ear to all suggestions of possible defeat.

That the Yankees had won battles was not denied; but it served only to increase the bitterness in the hearts of most Confederates, and there was a good deal of talk at this time of seizing property belonging to those who were suspected of sympathizing with the North, of whom there were more than a few in the State. But this came to nothing. There were, indeed, some among the far-seeing Southerners who were not above placing a portion of their crops in the hands of these Union men, thinking thus to save a little from the inevitable wreck.

On the whole, however, April's firm faith in the triumph of her cause appeared to be justified. As month after month passed, the memory of her mother's warning grew less impressive. Moreover, the proclamation freeing the slaves had had no effect whatever upon the negroes owned by Colonel May, for they were well and kindly treated. Throughout the country generally there was more or less restlessness to be noted among the colored population, but those of them who ran away fled from indifferent or cruel masters, and the better class of Southerners showed little sympathy for such owners.

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Moreover Mrs. May was one of the Kentucky Harriots who had always opposed secession. She had even heard herself referred to, in whispers to be sure, as "Henry May's Yankee wife." And in her own family she had never concealed a certain understanding of the North and had deplored the action of those hot-heads and politicians who had precipitated the conflict. But her husband was the colonel of a Georgia regiment, and her son, a lieutenant, and it never occurred to her to oppose their decision once it was taken.

Between April and her mother there was a very deep and true bond of affection; but, when Mrs. May strove to soften her daughter's bitterness toward the Union, the girl could not forget the fact that Kentucky was largely loyal to the North, and discounted her mother's opinion as being tinged with Yankee sentiments which a true Georgian could not accept. Thus, while there was no breach in their love for each other, the elder woman realized that circumstances made it impossible for her to ease the blow she believed must some day shatter April's hopes. And the girl, seeing nothing of the increasing misery outside her own prosperous circle, and hearing only the most optimistic predictions from the scores of young officers who danced attendance upon her whenever the opportunity afforded, grew increasingly confident and was more than ever ready to testify to her loyalty by a resentment toward anything that savored of sympathy for her enemies. Yet out of this well-nigh fanatical spirit unhappiness was bound to come. Already April hid a secret sorrow which sometimes brought tears to wet her pillow ere she went to sleep.

The passing of a year changed Harriot but little. She was still a most practical and unsentimental

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young person who looked upon the procuring of food for herself as the first duty of a growing girl. It was with no surprise, therefore, that Mortality, another of Aunt Decent's granddaughters, found her, one warm day in the early part of 1864, discreetly screened behind some shrubbery, munching persimmon dates.

"Oh, here yoh is!" exclaimed Mortality, flopping down on the grass beside the rustic chair on which Harriot sat. "Ah was a-thinkin' yoh might know who-all 'tis what's comin' in. More refugee-ers, I 'spects."

"Oh, goodness!" cried Harriot, standing up suddenly and peering through the bushes at a rather dilapidated ambulance drawn by two very thin mules which was slowly nearing the house. "If any more people come here I'll have to sleep in a trundle bed in April's room."

Harriot's wail was not without justice. Already the May house was overflowing with less fortunate individuals who had been driven out of their own homes or who were breaking their journeys about the country. The rich planters of the South boasted of their hospitality, and now that war had brought privations to less fortunate friends they felt an added obligation to share all they possessed. Every household that could afford it, sheltered some "refugees," as those were called who had been forced to forsake their own homes.

But this new arrival at the May establishment hardly appeared to be one of these. As Harriot watched, she saw a young girl maneuver her wide hoops through the narrow door of the ancient vehicle and proceed gravely about the business of superintending the disposal of her luggage upon the broad piazza. Then, having paid the driver, the newcomer

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sat down upon one of her brass-studded boxes with a sigh of relief.

"'Clare to goodness," chuckled Mortality, "that fancy miss ac's lack she'd done come to stay. An she don't appear to have no folks neither."

"She must have come to the wrong house," Harriot whispered. She had watched the proceedings of the stranger with increasing interest. There were no congenial girls of her own age living near, and her cousin Corinne was too grown-up to have any fun with these days. Harriot would have been glad to find a playmate; but she shook her head, being certain that this calm young stranger had made a mistake. No such guest was expected, that she knew.

"Mother and April are away, so I reckon I'd better tell her," she went on half to herself, and, stepping out briskly from behind the shrubbery, she hurried toward the house, followed by Mortality.

"This is Mr. Henry May's house," Harriot began at once. "Colonel Henry May, you know. He's my father, but of course he's with the army." She paused a moment, but no answer being forthcoming she continued rather breathlessly: "Mrs. Gordon May's place is over on the Abbeville road. Perhaps they are the ones you're looking for — or maybe the Beaumont Mays, though they're no kin to us and are living in Augusta now."

Again she paused, but the only response was a widening of the girl's smile, and Harriot grew slightly embarrassed; but she noted the well-made and rather fashionable clothes of this silent stranger and her regret continued to deepen.

"It's a pity that man drove off so fast," she went on, feeling that some one must talk. "Our horses have mostly been pressed, and I don't know what

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I'll find to send you away in, 'specially as mother and April are at the Ladies' Aid meeting, sewing for the soldiers. But of course I'm 'bliged to find something."

"'Deed, Miss Harry, 'tain't no use talkin'," Mortality half whispered. "Don't you-all see she's one of 'em dumbies?"

At this the strange girl laughed outright, a bright, cheerful laugh that set Harriot to smiling too.

"Really I'm not dumb," the visitor said with a chuckle. "I've just been wondering what happened to all my letters. I wrote weeks ago that I was coming."

"Oh, you did?" Harriot replied vaguely. "Well, of course, now-a-days letters never go where you expect them to."

The other nodded calmly, and Harriot regarded her with increasing admiration. She was so cool and self-possessed.

"At any rate, I'm here now!" the girl on the trunk remarked philosophically. "It's too late to help that, isn't it? But, if I'm in the way, I can go back to New York, can't I? Though it'll probably be no end of trouble."

"To New York!" Harriot exclaimed incredulously. "Did you run the blockade?"

"No," the other answered rather regretfully. "I wanted to — it would be a fine adventure, wouldn't it? — but I wasn't allowed. Papa wished me to travel by land, so they sent me down under a flag of truce. This is your mother coming in, isn't it?"

A carriage was rolling briskly into the drive and in another moment it drew up at the block near the porch. As Mrs. May descended the stranger slipped down from the trunk and went to meet her.

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"I'm sorry, Aunt Parthenia," she said precisely. "I fancy I should have waited for an invitation from you, shouldn't I? But father had to leave so unexpectedly — and even though we had had no answer to our letters he said it would be best for me to come, as he had information that you were still here. If you don't want me, I suppose I can arrange for another flag of truce to go back under, can't I?"

There was just the shadow of a break in the gentle voice as the strange girl said this; and the crisp pronunciation with its broad "a," so different from the slow Southern drawl, held a certain appeal that went straight to Mrs. May's heart.

"My dear child, of course you must stay," she said, taking the young girl in her motherly arms. "You are most welcome but — but, honey, who are you?"

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CHAPTER III

A GLIMPSE OF MR. LINCOLN

AT Mrs. May's question the strange girl drew back from the motherly embrace and glanced up at the older woman almost reproachfully.

"I should think you would know who I am when I called you 'Aunt Parthenia,'" she said.

"My dear," Mrs. May hastened to reply, "half of Alabama and nearly all of Georgia call me 'Aunt Parthenia.' Between the Mays and the Harriots I have so many connections that I can't remember them all. Especially those I've never seen."

The girl's face brightened immediately.

"I am Dorothea Drummond," she announced, and with the words the mystery was ended. Once more she was folded in Mrs. May's arms with a warmth that left no doubt of the affection that prompted it.

"Susie's baby!" Mrs. May exclaimed. "My little sister's baby! Girls! Girls!" she cried excitedly to her two daughters, "this is your own cousin from England."

"I'm mighty glad you did come to the right place after all!" Harriot burst out, taking her cousin's hand and shaking it vigorously.

"Even though you thought I was a 'dumby'?" Dorothea laughed back, with a twinkle in her eye.

"I never did think so," Harriot protested, and then turned to Mortality, who was gaping curiously. "Itty, you run to Aunt Decent right off and tell her

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my cousin, Miss Dorothea, is here, and is as hungry as she can be. We'll be out presently. Run now. You are hungry, of course," she went on, addressing Dorothea, as Mortality scampered away. "You're 'bliged to be, after coming all the way from England."

By this time April had dismissed the carriage and joined them.

"We are very glad to see you, Dorothea," she said, leaning down and kissing the girl warmly. Her welcome was sincere, for not only was she attracted by Dorothea's appearance, but the fact that this new cousin had come from England, where the South still counted upon sympathy for their cause, was an additional reason for cordiality. "I thought you were about my age," she added with an inviting smile.

"I am past fifteen," Dorothea replied.

"Then you're my cousin most!" Harriot insisted. "I'm not fourteen yet, but you're nearer my age than you are April's."

"You're just a baby, Harry," April teased.

"Oh, it's horrid to be the youngest!" her sister protested. "Your family never want you to grow up."

"I think it's rather worse to be both the youngest and the oldest," Dorothea put in, laughing. "Then you're expected to be both grown-up and a baby, too."

"All the same you're mostly my age," Harriot maintained stoutly, and, as if to seal their friendship, she, too, kissed Dorothea enthusiastically.

"But that doesn't make her any more your cousin than she is mine," April contended. "You needn't think, Harry, that you are going to have Dorothea all to yourself."

It was said so sweetly that the newcomer, looking

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up into the face of the radiant girl before her, felt a warm throb in her heart. She was no longer a stranger. Her experiences in New York and Washington had not served to break through the reserve that she came, one day, to recognize as the British side of her character; but her welcome here had none of the English formality to which she was accustomed. This Southern greeting, with its frank cordiality, stirred within her a response hitherto unknown. She was a little puzzled at the dawning of a new day in her outlook upon life.

"You girls will have to share a cousin, but she is all my niece," Mrs. May laughed. "Come in, my dear," she went on, putting an arm about Dorothea. "You will find that we are without many things to make you as comfortable as we should like; but we are not the least, tiny bit less glad to see you on that account."

She led the way into the breakfast room where a substantial "refreshment" was being prepared for this latest guest. And here, after she had eaten a little, Dorothea told of her experiences in Washington before she started South.

"I really did come from England to visit you, Aunt Parthenia," she said. "You know you wrote many times that you would be glad to see me."

"Of course!" Mrs. May nodded.

"Well," the girl went on, "father had to come over on diplomatic business, and I begged him to bring me because I wanted to know my relations in America. When we sailed every one thought that the war would be ended by the time we arrived; but it wasn't, so I stayed with father in Washington. I wrote you as soon as we landed, saying I was coming; and father had the letter sent through the lines. But, of course, I was not very much surprised at not

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hearing from you; though it never occurred to me that you might not have received my letter. Then, quite suddenly, just when we were nicely settled, father was ordered to South America."

"And was he 'bliged to go?" demanded Harriot, munching the remains of a pecan praline garnered from Dorothea's lunch.

"Oh, of course," her cousin answered. "That is the way it always is in the Diplomatic Service. You can't ever tell where you may be sent the next day. There was a ship leaving almost immediately, and father only had an hour or two to get ready if he was to reach New York in time to sail. He was for starting me back to England with Fräulein —"

"Who was she?" asked April.

"My governess and companion," Dorothea replied with a laugh. "I wonder where she is now, poor Fräulein? Well, I teased father to let me try to come here if I could safely, and he said I might. Then he took the train, and a few days afterward I started South."

"But, my dear," Mrs. May exclaimed, "there must have been something more than that. How could you travel without an escort?"

"Besides, the Yankees would never let you through their lines," April put in bitterly. "Did you run the blockade?"

"I thought for a little while I should have to, if I was to come at all," Dorothea continued. "You see, just before he left, father wrote a letter to the Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton, asking that I be permitted to go through the Union lines on my way here. So the next day I went to see Mr. Stanton. It was a long time before I was let into his office; but at last I was, and he sat at a large desk with

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father's letter, which I had sent in to him, in his hand. He looked at me pretty sharply.

"'Well, young lady,' he began at once. 'You might have spared yourself this trip. I have issued the last pass through our lines.'

"He said it as if he were rather pleased to have a chance to growl at me. You see the English are not popular in Washington —"

"That is to their everlasting credit," April broke in warmly. "They are all friends of the Confederacy."

"That is what Mr. Stanton was thinking," Dorothea went on, nodding her head wisely. "Father had warned me that there might be trouble. The Secretary, of course, didn't want to offend the English if he could help it, and I didn't mean to be put off so easily.

"'Surely you could let me have a pass, sir, couldn't you?' I pleaded.

"'I could — but I won't,' he answered gruffly.

"'My father thought you might take his position somewhat into consideration,' I suggested meekly.

"'Then he should have written to Seward!' the Secretary of War snapped out angrily. 'I am not one of those who think it would do any good to our cause to favor the English.'

"'But the Drummonds are Scots, sir,' I reminded him, at which he threw up his head like a restive horse.

"'It is the same thing,' he cried.

"'Ye'll nae find a Scotsman agreein' wi' ye in that, Mr. Secretary,' I retorted, for you know we are not English and it annoys us to have people think we are.

"Before he could reply we were both surprised

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to hear a low chuckle of amusement and I turned to meet the gaze of a tall, lanky man, whom, of course, I recognized at once."

"Abe Lincoln!" ejaculated Harriot scornfully, and Dorothea eyed her younger cousin with a momentary look of surprise.

"You'd never think of calling him that if once you'd seen him," she went on slowly. "I don't know quite how to describe him —"

"They say he's the ugliest man in America," April interrupted with a laugh of derision.

"Oh, but he isn't ugly!" Dorothea protested earnestly. "Truly he isn't. He's not like any other man I ever saw. I looked up into his face, and it was so sad that my heart just ached and I felt that I wanted to comfort him, only — only there wasn't any way I could do it, was there? And he was tired, too, dreadfully tired. You could tell from the droop of his body — and his eyes. But all that I noticed later. When I turned round first, he was smiling and watching me with so pleasant a look that I wasn't at all afraid or embarrassed, as one would have expected.

"'Well, little girl,' he said, just as father might have said it, 'I think you scored on the Secretary of War that time; though indeed we all make the same mistake in this country. But what is it all about?'

"He put his hand on my shoulder and we stood together before Mr. Stanton, who scowled up at us for all the world like an angry schoolmaster at two naughty pupils.

"'The young lady is the daughter of Mr. Drummond of the British Embassy,' the Secretary grudgingly explained. 'She wishes to go to Georgia, and I have just told her that it is impossible.'

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"'Hum!' murmured Mr. Lincoln, looking down at me with a twinkle in his eye though his face was quite sober. 'So you think she is too dangerous a person to receive a pass through our lines, Mr. Secretary?'

"'I intend to issue no more passes, Mr. President,' Mr. Stanton said bluntly.

"Again Mr. Lincoln looked down at me, drawing a long face.

"'You know he's quite right,' he murmured, half to himself. 'The pass privilege has been greatly abused, no doubt of that, and when the Secretary of War puts his foot down there's no moving him. I suppose we'll have to go over to the Secretary of State and see what he can do for us.'

"Mr. Stanton snorted.

"'Mr. President!' he exploded, 'is our cause to be jeopardized by the weakness of a man who can't say "No"?'

"'Is our cause so weak that it will be put in jeopardy by letting a little girl pass through our lines?' Mr. Lincoln answered patiently.

"I don't know what Mr. Stanton might have said to that, for before he could speak a man in uniform came hurrying in with a dispatch in his hand which he laid on the desk. The messenger himself seemed excited and much pleased, as if he bore good news. The Secretary glanced at it and then jumped to his feet with an exclamation of delight.

"'This is better than we could possibly have expected, Mr. President!' he cried, handing the paper to Mr. Lincoln. I do not know what it was all about, but it was plainly something which was favorable to the North, and I watched Mr. Lincoln as he took the message, only to see an expression of deep sadness come over his face. Whatever he read

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on the yellow slip in his hand brought no gladness to his heart. He stood there, forgetting all about us, and gazed out of the window with the look of one who had learned of a great sorrow.

"Mr. Stanton watched him for a moment and seemed to grow irritated at his lack of enthusiasm.

"'Are you displeased with the news, Mr. President?' he asked irritably.

"'My grief is for all those who suffer,' was the quiet answer and Mr. Lincoln handed back the message to the Secretary who sat down at his desk again.

"Then the President turned to me once more and, noting that Mr. Stanton was busying himself with other matters, he led me into an alcove beside a wide window and asked me all about myself; who I was, why I wanted to go South and if I was interested in the war? And I told him the truth, which was that I hadn't thought very much about it."

"And then I suppose he asked you if you'd read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' and gave you a copy," April cut in sarcastically.

Dorothea gave a funny little chuckle.

"Not exactly, but he did wish to know if I'd read it and what I thought of it. And I said I thought it very long, at which he seemed highly amused and agreed with me heartily. After that, for some time, he looked out of the window evidently thinking deeply, all the while jingling some keys or coins in his pocket, but at length he spoke again.

"'My dear,' he said, gently, 'you tell me you are going South on a visit to a little country village. Perhaps, down there, you may escape this war. Maybe before you return it will be all over; but remember that the South is a part of my country as dear to me as is the North. I have ready a Proclamation of Amnesty for the whole South, from

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Mr. Davis down to the humblest citizen, which shall be published the moment they lay down their arms.' "

"The South will not have to beg Mr. Lincoln for mercy!" cried April. "But he seems to have made a Yankee of you, Cousin Dorothea," she added, a little suspiciously.

"Oh, no," Dorothea answered quickly. "I've always been for the South, you know. 'Most everybody in England is, but I do admire Mr. Lincoln. I can't help that. He's queer, and his clothes don't fit him, and — and — Oh, I can't explain what I feel — but, when you talk to him, you know in your heart that he is a great man."

She spoke so earnestly and seriously that for a moment her hearers were impressed and there was silence around the table.

"I want to hear about your coming through the lines," Harriot broke out at last. "It must have been great fun."

"I think that had better wait till Dorothea is settled down," Mrs. May said, rising to her feet. "Come with me, my dear, and I'll show you to your room."

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CHAPTER IV

UNPACKING TRUNKS

"IT'S a charming room, Aunt Parthenia!" Dorothea exclaimed, glancing out of the window overlooking the box-edged beds of the flower garden, but noting particularly the cheerful blaze on the hearth. "I shall love it here so much that I shan't ever want to go away again."

Mrs. May turned from straightening the curtains at the front where the windows opened on the gallery roof.

"That's very prettily said, my dear," she returned. "We shouldn't like anything better than to have you stay always in your American home."

There was a suspicion of tears in Dorothea's eyes as she looked up at her aunt and then, impulsively, she put her arms about the elder woman with a convulsive hug.

"I really have never had a home," she murmured, half to herself; and Mrs. May, understanding what was in the girl's heart, patted her shoulder lovingly.

"April is next door to you and I'm just across the hall," Harriot explained a moment later.

"Where she can look down upon the cook-house, and see just what's going on," April said, banteringly.

"Indeed I can," Harriot admitted unblushingly. "I always know what Aunt Decent is baking by the smells coming in at the windows. You'll find that my room has decided advantages, Dorothea."

While they were waiting for the trunks to be

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brought up Dorothea, yielding to Harriot's insistent demands for the story of her adventures on the way from Washington, told briefly what had happened.

"It wasn't very much," she began. "Everything was made very easy for me, and all the people I met were so pleasant and kind, that it seemed as if I was finding friends wherever I went. All the Americans are like that, aren't they? It's different in England. Of course, as I might have expected though I didn't, Fräulein lost all her courage and refused to go. You might have thought she would have to fight. She talked of both armies as if they wouldn't have anything to do but kill us. But I wasn't to be put off. There was a Mrs. Warren and her two children who were going through the lines at the same time, and she looked after me till we reached Charlotte. There I was handed over to a Miss Pettigrew who brought me here. So you see," Dorothea ended, "it wasn't much of an adventure after all."

"Oh, but you haven't told us about the soldiers, or the flag of truce or — or lots of things you must have seen," Harriot suggested.

"There isn't really much to tell," Dorothea returned; but in her answer there was a hint of reluctance to talk of the matter. "We crossed a river called the Rappahannock in boats with a white flag flying, 'under the special protection of the two great American armies,' they said. There was a rope stretched on the Southern side and a Confederate officer met us, lifting the barrier to let us through. All the officers on each side were very polite and friendly to each other, exchanging newspapers and inquiring for mutual friends; but before we knew it everything was all over. After that, we were driven over awful roads to call on one of your commanding officers to deliver our passes and thanks for

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our special truce, as is customary. Oh, here are my boxes and I want to unpack them."

Seeming glad of a diversion which allowed a change of subject, Dorothea ended her recital abruptly and turned to where two colored boys were unstrapping her luggage. Mrs. May watched her for a moment and unconsciously shook her head as if a little puzzled. April, her eyes upon the floor, sat immovable, as if her thoughts were very far away.

"I wonder why she doesn't want to talk about the soldiers?" Harriot asked herself. All three had noted something of a lack of frankness that had set them wondering.

But trunks fresh from outside the blockade had a strong attraction for April and Harriot. Mrs. May, too, did not attempt to conceal her curiosity. However she had many household duties that called for immediate attention.

"I'm just as anxious to see your pretty things as the girls," she said, as she rose to leave the room; "but I am obliged to wait till later. I'll send Merry up."

At once there was a protest.

"We don't need her!" Harriot exclaimed.

"Let us help Dorothea, mother," April proposed, a little excited in anticipation of a look at foreign finery.

"Very well," Mrs. May agreed and went away regretfully. She, too, was anxious to see if the fashions had changed greatly during the years when the war had cut them off almost wholly from the rest of the world.

Left to themselves the three girls contemplated the fine array of boxes and trunks, which seemed to hold an excessive amount of apparel for one young lady.

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"Gracious me!" exclaimed Harriot. "It's good those two big wardrobes are in this room. You must have a dress for every day in the month."

"Wait and you'll see what I have," Dorothea laughed knowingly. "There are lots of things besides clothes. I had to be very careful about my packing."

"Why?" demanded the practical Harriot.

"Because the Union army wanted to be sure I wasn't carrying anything down here that would be useful," Dorothea explained. "They examine everything, of course. I suspected it would be like the customs house business in Europe, so I prepared."

"And did they dare to search through everything?" demanded April indignantly.

"No, not *everything*," Dorothea answered with a significant emphasis on the last word. "The man who was detailed to look over my luggage was awfully nice. He asked me at once if I had anything in my boxes that would give 'aid or comfort to the enemy' and I said, 'No, sir! because I don't call an aunt or a cousin an enemy, do you?' He laughed and remarked he'd heard of those 'as was enemies and those as wasn't'; but when I told him I came from England, he looked at all my traps, shook his head and let them go through without much bother. As a matter of fact he fastened bands of white muslin on them with dabs of red sealing-wax to show they were 'passed packages' — and you know I was just a little disappointed."

"But why?" demanded Harriot. "If he let them through without mussing everything, I should think you would have been glad."

"Oh! but I'd packed them so carefully," Dorothea answered with a knowing smile. "Come, let's have a look — but you'll be careful, won't you?"

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All three set to work but they had not gone far when Dorothea had to repeat her warning.

"Look out for that, Cousin April," she said, as the older girl took a tightly rolled silk parasol out of the trunk.

"It's mighty pretty," April remarked, looking at it curiously, "but not very perishable. I don't see why I need be 'specially careful of it."

"Open it over the bed," Dorothea advised, and, when her suggestion was followed, a shower of pills fell out.

"Oh!" cried April and Harriot in one breath. "You hid contraband in it. What are these, Dorothea?"

"Opium pills!" was the answer. "I read in the papers that the poor Southern soldiers had little to stop the pain of their wounds, so I brought as much as I could. It isn't very easy to get in Washington, though I sent to a lot of chemists' shops so I wouldn't be suspected."

"That's fine!" exclaimed April. "We've had an awful time about opium. Last year it rained just at the wrong time and our rows of poppies had very few flowers on them. We have been very short of it since."

"And it's a dreadfully sticky task to get the opium," Harriot explained, twisting up her face. "We have to pick the poppy heads when they're ripe and pierce them with a coarse needle. Then we have to catch the gum in a cup and let it dry. We're hoping to get a lot this summer."

Meanwhile, as they talked, the unpacking went on, and presently April held up a beautiful French doll of huge proportions.

"Is this for little Harriot?" she asked, with a teasing grin at her younger sister who had never,

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even in her younger days, had any taste for dolls.

"That's one of the things I was most disappointed about," Dorothea answered. "I just longed for the examining officer to find that, and I had made up my mind to tell him it was for my little Cousin Harriot; but he never noticed it."

"It's very pretty," Harriot remarked coldly, "but I'm a trifle too old for dolls."

"Not for this one," Dorothea cried. "It's stuffed with ground coffee and quinine pills."

"Then I'll be glad to have it," Harriot shouted, ready to laugh at herself. "Give it to me, April."

"No, no!" her sister replied, retreating across the room. "Dorothea didn't say she brought it for you. She said she was *going* to *say* that. However, you can have the pills, if you want them. They're fine and bitter, worse than any dog-wood berry ones you ever tasted."

"I'll have some of the coffee, too," Harriot insisted. "Oh, just imagine a cup of real coffee! I believe I've forgotten what it tastes like. But, Dorothea, how did you ever think of such a thing as stuffing a doll with coffee?"

"It wasn't my own idea at all," Dorothea confessed. "Some years ago, when father and I were traveling on the Continent, we saw a woman who tried the same trick in one of the custom houses. I can still remember my horror when the officer who was examining her luggage picked up a perfectly beautiful doll, all dressed in flowered silk, and deliberately snapped off its head, in spite of the fact that she told him it was for her brother's little girl who was ill. But I was more astonished when the man drew out yards and yards of the finest lace which was concealed in the doll's body. That's what gave me the idea."

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"Such are the advantages of travel," said April quizzically.

"It must be great fun to go everywhere," Harriot put in half enviously. "Nobody I know ever went any farther than New Orleans or the White Sulphur. I've only been to the plantation and back, and that wasn't even out of Georgia. I certainly should like to travel in Europe, wouldn't you, April?"

"Indeed I should," her sister agreed. "You are quite to be envied, Dorothea."

"I'm not so sure of that," was the unexpected answer. "It isn't so much fun as you'd think. Most of the time you live in hotels and keep wondering if they are clean. Father and I would love a chance to settle down and have a home of our own. We talk a lot about it; but, somehow, there never comes a time when we can do it. Look out, April, that hat's full of tea!" she exclaimed suddenly. "You'll find it between the crown and the lining."

Mrs. May came in again at that moment to see how the unpacking was progressing and stayed to praise the thoughtfulness and ingenuity that had brought them so many long-foregone luxuries.

"China tea!" she exclaimed, snuffing it longingly. "Yes, it's there, I can smell it. How good it will taste after the sassafras and raspberry leaves we've been drinking. But," she went on with a drop in her voice, "I think we must keep it for invalids."

"But, Aunt Parthenia, I brought it for you!" Dorothea insisted. "They are presents from papa — the medicines and groceries — and he'd want *you* to have them, wouldn't he? In that box there are some things I picked out myself for you and the girls."

Dorothea, flushed with pleasure at the reception her gifts were receiving, opened another trunk in

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some little excitement. On her knees before it she paused in momentary embarrassment.

"I don't know whether you'll laugh at what I've brought; but I read in the papers how short you were of such things in the South and I thought they might be more useful than just luxuries."

So saying she produced package after package of trimmings, ribbons, buttons, sewing silk, pins, needles, hair-pins and other feminine oddments. At each fresh discovery of these simple treasures Mrs. May and the two girls gave expression to their surprise and delight.

"Real pins!" exclaimed Mrs. May, looking at them as if they were strange and little known treasures. "I hoarded my last dozen for months, but they vanished long ago."

"And real needles, mother, see!" cried Harriot.

April laughed gayly.

"You'd think that Harry cared for nothing in the world so much as sewing," she teased.

"I do sew sometimes," Harriot protested. "And now that we have some truly buttons, not persimmon seeds, I'll do more of it. I like to sew on buttons when we have them."

"I think the pins are the greatest blessing you could have brought us, Dorothea," Mrs. May assured her enthusiastically. "I am so tired of sticking things together with thorns and pretending they are pins because they have sealing-wax heads."

Then they began to find the dainty dresses, and lengths of fine materials that Dorothea had brought and, like four women anywhere, they were completely absorbed in fingering them and admiring them, each, no doubt, wondering if they would be becoming. They laughed and joked, praising this or that piece of silk, or camel's hair, or de beige, and

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forgetting everything else for the time being. Then suddenly Dorothea stopped talking and listened. She had heard a gentle knocking at the door.

"Some one wishes to come in, Aunt Parthenia," she said, calling attention to the summons.

But as she spoke the door slowly opened and there appeared on the threshold, the dearest, sweetest white-haired little lady that Dorothea had ever seen, who at the sight of the finery scattered about, clasped her hands in delight.

"Fal-lals!" she exclaimed. "Oh joy!"

"Oh, Imogene," cried Mrs. May, "here are things that will delight your heart. I didn't know you were in. But this is Susie's daughter from England who has just arrived. I'm sure you'll love her."

Dorothea's heart went out, on the instant, to this lady who, with a smile of welcome, came swiftly into the room and held out her arms.

"Your mother was my dearest friend, my child," she said in a low, musical voice that seemed to thrill the girl. "I am overjoyed to see her daughter."

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CHAPTER V

CONFIDENCES

FOR a moment Miss Imogene's white hair gave Dorothea the impression that she was quite an old lady; but that quickly vanished. There were no betraying wrinkles in the bright face and the girl was puzzled, for, in spite of a certain youthfulness, there was also the suggestion of a past generation in the ways of this new-found friend.

Miss Imogene was very small, with the tiniest hands and feet, and she walked as if borne from place to place upon the air. When she spoke it was in a gentle, plaintive voice which seemed to belie the sprightly expressions she used and the sparkling wit and raillery that were ever ready on her tongue.

She was dressed daintily and with care. The material of her gown was far from fine, and the ribbons and ornaments of the luxurious days before the war were absent. Nevertheless she had the manner of wearing costly stuffs and carried herself with a certain style that was the envy of many a younger woman.

She embraced Dorothea tenderly, with a little catch of her breath as if this meeting brought back vivid remembrances of past joys and sorrows. Then holding the girl at arms' length she surveyed her critically with sparkling black eyes.

"Bless me, Parthenia!" she exclaimed, "she is as dark as I am, and yet I can see my dear Susie's face

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again. We shall love each other," she went on directly to Dorothea. "I intend to make you love me for your mother's sake."

"I think I love you already," Dorothea answered half-shyly. Indeed this quaint little lady had the knack of winning those with whom she came into contact.

"Everybody loves Cousin Imogene," Harriot declared. "You just can't help it, you know."

"The boys as well as the girls," April laughed; "so look out for your beaux, Dorothea."

"Do not believe all that they say, my dear," Miss Imogene protested with the very faintest of becoming blushes. "They love to tease their old cousin. And now let me see the finery you have brought from the outside world."

She was soon hovering over the silks and satins and fine linen Dorothea spread out for them to admire.

"Ah," murmured Miss Imogene, holding a gay flowered muslin in her dainty fingers, "I wore a dress made of a material quite like that when Larry Stanchfield gave his celebrated supper. You remember, 'Thenia."

"Indeed I do," Mrs. May answered with a knowing glance at the other. "And I remember his toast 'To the fairest of all dark women! Fairer than any blonde.'"

"Do you really recollect that?" murmured Miss Imogene.

"Yes, my dear, and I know whose slipper he drank it out of," Mrs. May continued. "It was a very gay party and not one to be forgotten."

"But the dresses were cut very differently in those days," Miss Imogene said, a little hurriedly, almost as if she wished to change the subject.

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"But whose slipper was it?" demanded the inquisitive Harriot.

"Cousin Imogene's, of course," April responded, laughing.

"Is that true?" Harriot insisted.

"Yes, honey," Miss Imogene replied. "I dropped it as I was getting into our coach when we went home after the Militia Ball. Dear me, how long ago that seems!"

"And didn't you ever get it back?" Harriot questioned.

"No, not that one, but the next day a little glass slipper came, filled with sweet hearts," Miss Imogene answered with the most charming of smiles.

"We've seen it on your dressing-table!" the two girls cried delightedly.

"Yes, that is the very one," Miss Imogene confessed. "And there was a bit of verse with it. Let's see if I remember it." She looked up at the ceiling a moment, her eyes half closed as if she could see there the picture she brought back in her mind.

"Ah, now I know. It went like this:

'Accept, fair lady, in exchange
For one I hold,
This crystal slipper filled with hearts
From one made bold
By Cupid, who alas, can find no shoe to fit
Which will contain the hearts that seek a place in it.'

"It is rather pretty, don't you think?" she ended, appealing to them all with the gentlest of smiles.

"I think it's beautiful," said Dorothea enthusiastically.

Already she was growing to love this strange lady who, while she was quick to realize the present, seemed also to be dwelling in the past.

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"But who sent it, Cousin Imogene?" demanded the inquisitive Harriot.

"Harry," said her mother rather sharply, "don't ask so many questions."

"But I wanted to know," Harriot persisted, and there was a momentary argument before the matter was disposed of; although Dorothea noticed that Miss Imogene did not betray the name of the gentleman who had sent her the crystal slipper.

It took a good while to unpack all of the trunks, for each piece of finery was exhibited and talked over and admired by these Southern ladies whom the war had now deprived of all such pretty things. But it was finally accomplished. The cupboards and bureau drawers were filled and the empty boxes banished to the attic.

"At last, my dear, you are at home," said Mrs. May as she surveyed the room, once more in order. "And you must rest an hour before supper."

"I really don't feel tired, Aunt Parthenia," Dorothea demurred; "I never take naps."

"Neither do I!" Harriot put in with a note of triumph; decidedly this new cousin was to her taste.

"And I always do," Miss Imogene remarked placidly. "It keeps the roses blooming longer in our cheeks."

With a light laugh she went off with April, followed by the reluctant Harriot, who seemed very averse to leaving Dorothea even for a moment.

"I shall wait and see that you obey me," Mrs. May said as she closed the door behind her daughter. "Come, my dear, put on a wrapper and rest, even if you don't sleep."

Dorothea set about doing as Mrs. May suggested, glad to have the elder lady to herself for a little.

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It was more than just a visit to her relatives in Georgia that had brought her there, though the chief reason lay very deep in her heart.

"Aunt Parthenia," she began as she sat in a comfortable chair beside her aunt, "you are glad to see me, aren't you?"

Mrs. May guessed what was in her mind, indeed she had stayed behind the others on purpose to have a little talk with her niece. So she reached out and took the girl's hand gently in her own.

"My dearest child," she said warmly, "I am more than glad to see you. Your mother was my only sister, and I can't tell you how I have longed to know the little girl she left behind. Do you remember her at all, honey?"

"A little," Dorothea answered. "Of course I was very small when she died, but I can still recollect a dear face that bent over me before I went to sleep at night. Even now I see it sometimes, just as I am going off. One of the things I want most was to have you tell me about her. Father says hardly anything — it hurts him to think about it, I know, because I can always see a shadow come over his face when I mention my mother. So I do not like to make his heart ache. But, oh, Aunt Parthenia, I have longed for some one to talk to who remembers her. She was very pretty, wasn't she? Does this look like her?"

On her wrist Dorothea wore a gold clasp mounted on a red velvet ribbon, and opening this case she showed it to her aunt.

Mrs. May gazed at the picture, her eyes growing soft in her recollection of the girlish face she saw, and for a moment or two there was silence in the room.

"It is very like her, dear," she said finally.

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"Very like her, indeed. She was just as sweet and pretty as this painting shows her to be."

"That is how I think of her," Dorothea remarked. "And that is the face I see sometimes in my dreams. But I am never sure whether it is my real mother or the remembrance of the picture that I see. Yet, somehow, I have felt sure she was like that and it is a comfort to me to have the picture with me. It makes her seem nearer to me."

"Do you always wear it on your wrist?" asked Mrs. May.

"Always," answered Dorothea. "Father told me red was her favorite color, so I have a supply of red ribbons to mount it on. And, you know, Aunt Parthenia, except for father, who gave it to me, you are the only one who has seen it. At school lots of the girls wondered what was in the locket, but, somehow, I never wanted to tell them. It was as if mother and I had that little picture between us and it wasn't a thing you could show to strangers. You think I'm right, don't you?"

"I am sure you are, dear, if it gives you any comfort," Mrs. May answered earnestly.

"Well, it does," Dorothea went on. "You see, for a while I was at boarding-school and father was all alone. Then he wanted me with him, for mother's sake mostly, I think, and ever since we have been living first in one place and then in another, all over the world. It's been very interesting, but it has never been like home; for of course I rarely stayed anywhere long enough to make any real friends. That is one of the reasons why I wanted so much to see you and my cousins. That, and to talk to you of mother."

"And to find a real home, Dorothea," Mrs. May murmured, patting the girl's hand. "Hereafter, no

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matter what happens, there is always a place for you here, and the girls will soon be like your sisters."

"April is wonderful," Dorothea said warmly; "and Harriot is so funny and dear. I know I shall love them. Indeed I loved you all just as soon as I saw you. You were all so good and kind and made me feel welcome right away. In England, now, it would have taken weeks and weeks before I should have been able to talk to you like this."

"I understand," Mrs. May agreed, nodding. "In the South you will find that every one is very friendly. In one way or another most of the people down here are kin to each other or else they are friends of our friends, so it is just like one big family. If it wasn't for this terrible war you would see how happily we live."

There was a pause for a moment, Dorothea looking out of the window with her face very thoughtful.

"You know, Aunt Parthenia," she said, after a little, "I saw the soldiers on both sides as I came through."

"Yes, I know," Mrs. May replied, "and I thought there was something you didn't want to talk about."

"There was," Dorothea confessed; "I'm sure you'll understand, Aunt Parthenia, but I didn't know what the others might think. You see I don't believe the South can win the war — though I'm awfully *for* it."

"What makes you say that, Dorothea?" Mrs. May asked earnestly.

"Because, when I came through the Northern army," Dorothea explained, "all the men I saw looked well-fed and strong; everything they wanted was at hand to make them comfortable; and they were cheery and joked with each other; they were like boys on a holiday. But when I came through

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the Confederate lines it was awful, Aunt Parthenia. The men looked half starved. They were in rags and they looked so haggard and drawn, as if they actually suffered. It isn't fair that they should be expected to fight against those strong men of the North. It isn't fair, Aunt Parthenia!"

"No, my dear, it isn't fair," her aunt agreed. "I wish this war had never come. There are those who still doubt my loyalty to the Confederacy, for I am not afraid to say we should never have seceded, yet I *am* loyal to the South. It is my home, and the home of all my friends and relatives. I love it, but I have seen for a long time that there is only more suffering and misery in store for us — and, in the end, defeat. You will soon find to what shifts we have already been put to manage to live. And here in Georgia we are very well off. You are right that it isn't fair to ask our men to go on fighting against overwhelming odds; but, my dear, don't talk about that here. The feeling against the North is very bitter and any one who does not proclaim perfect confidence that the South will win is treated like a traitor."

"Of course, I've always wanted you to win," Dorothea affirmed once more.

"You will hear only that side of the matter in this house, honey," Mrs. May cautioned. "We all want the South to win, now war is here; but some of us are very sorry that it was ever brought about. It was the politicians did it, and you will do well to remember that there are two sides to the story."

"Of course I don't know very much about it," Dorothea confessed. "Father, you know, doesn't talk about the war at all, even to me. But it's so different in the North. They have so much, and somehow it's natural to want the weaker side to win.

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But, Aunt Parthenia, it is hard to believe that Mr. Lincoln is the cruel man they say he is down here. Once you've seen him and talked to him, you just can't believe that."

"I am sure he is the best friend the South has, my dear," Mrs. May half whispered; "but that is quite between ourselves. I shouldn't dare say it to any one else I know. Particularly to April. Remember, honey, she is a very staunch Rebel."

"I always think that mother would have been a Rebel, too," Dorothea said softly. "I fancy that's the reason I am one."

"You seem a very mild Rebel," Mrs. May laughed, getting to her feet; "and you'll be a very tired one if you don't rest a little. Remember you have a lot of people to meet to-night and I want my Susie's baby to do her mother justice." She rose to her feet and, leaning down, kissed the girl again. "I am glad to have you here, dear, for your own sake as well as for your mother's."

Dorothea's heart was too full to make a reply, but she hugged her aunt, who understood, and a moment later left the girl alone.

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CHAPTER VI

RED STRINGS

ONE of those most deeply interested in the arrival of Dorothea was Lucy, the colored girl whom Mrs. May had appointed to attend upon her niece. Her mistress's pretty clothes set the little maid in an ecstasy of delight and she would have liked nothing better than to dress Dorothea in all of them, one after the other, to see how they looked. She was ready for all sorts of gossip, and while she combed and braided her young lady's hair she talked at a great rate of the quality folks in the neighborhood, of "Ol' Miss," as she called Mrs. May, and "Young Miss," meaning April. A good deal of the talk Dorothea could make neither head nor tail of, but she liked to listen to the soft Southern accents and smiled more than once at the unfamiliar expressions, of which she comprehended but half the meaning.

She was almost dressed when there was a knock at the door and Miss Imogene floated into the room with her bright, bird-like air. She cocked her head on one side as she surveyed Dorothea and then nodded as if satisfied.

"You may run along now, Lucy," she told the maid; "I'll finish Miss Dorothea."

"Yes'm," Lucy replied, but she went reluctantly, with many backward glances.

"I couldn't resist the temptation to look at you in your finery before any one else, my dear," Miss

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Imogene began. "I wanted to see how far behind the times our patterns are — and things look so different in the hand."

She, herself, was dressed with care, and, though there were wanting touches here and there to show the very latest whim of fashion, her hoops were as wide as Dorothea's and she looked as dainty as a picture.

She put the finishing touches to Dorothea's toilet and then sat down with a little gesture of invitation to the girl to occupy a chair near her.

"We've a few minutes before all is ready downstairs, and I thought you'd like to know something of the people you are to meet," Miss Imogene suggested.

"Indeed I should," Dorothea agreed, making herself comfortable. "It's awfully awkward if you don't know who is related to you and all about them. And I have lived so far from my American relatives, haven't I?"

Miss Imogene nodded understandingly, at the same moment slipping a dainty finger inside a red velvet band she wore about her neck as if it might be a little tight. As she did this she glanced at Dorothea rather keenly and a few moments later made a gesture as if to brush back the hair from her forehead.

"First of all there's your Cousin Hal," Miss Imogene began. "The dearest boy I know. He's fighting, of course."

She named over half a dozen others of those who were living for the time being at the Mays. Two or three ladies "refugeeing," or on their way to other points and breaking the journey at Washington; a number of officers in the Confederate Army, busy all

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day with duties of one sort or another, consisting mainly of gathering food or horses wherever they could be found.

"Then there's Val Tracy," she went on. "You'll like him. He's Irish and has a gay, blarneying tongue. Compliments flow from him like water down hill. He's in the Army, though I think it is more for the fun of fighting than for any faith he has in the cause of the South."

Miss Imogene continued with her description of the people Dorothea was soon to meet, and then quite suddenly changed the subject.

"Dorothea dear," she asked abruptly, again slipping her finger under the red band around her neck, "have you heard any mention up North of the Confederate prison at Andersonville?"

"It was talked of a little, I think," the girl answered hesitatingly. "At least I don't remember whether that was the name, but there was something in the papers about how badly the Union soldiers were treated in the prisons here. I hope it isn't true."

"I am afraid there is more than a little truth in what is being said," Miss Imogene acknowledged. "It isn't all our fault, you know. We haven't enough to eat ourselves, so of course the prisoners suffer like the rest of us. It is very hard on them, poor souls. Many of them try to escape by coming through Georgia. But there are few who get away."

A little later as they descended the broad stairs, Dorothea heard so much talking and laughter that she concluded there must be a special cause for rejoicing, and was a little surprised to find that there was no great news, no particular occasion for merri-

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ment, other than the natural gayety of spirit that she was to find universal among these Southerners among whom she had come to live.

She was introduced to the assembly one after the other, and each had a pleasant and characteristic word to say to her. Val Tracy, true to his reputation, at once paid her a compliment, but in such a bright laughing spirit that his extravagance of expression was robbed of any offense.

"I have heard it is your way to say flattering things," Dorothea answered his little speech.

"And to mean them, Miss Drummond," he returned with a bow. "Faith, the man would be dumb who could fail to have a pretty speech on his tongue's tip when he sees so inspiring a subject."

"Don't mind his blarney, Cousin Dorothea," Hal May laughed. "It's notorious. After a while, you won't notice it any more. It's only at first that it makes an impression."

"'Tis better to make a first impression than none at all," Val laughed.

"You're right, young man," Miss Imogene said gently; "and do not fear that even the oldest of us resent your compliments. We like them, don't we, April?"

"Indeed we do, Val," April replied. "Hal is too stupid to appreciate us."

"It takes an Irishman to do that, April," Val protested.

So the bantering went on through the supper and Dorothea, sitting quietly looking from one to the other about the table, thought it was strange indeed that this company of young people should be so gay and care-free with all the evidences of war about them. Everything they saw must have reminded them of the conflict. The young officers wore tat-

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tered uniforms, stained and patched; the girls made-over finery; the very food was so limited in variety that Aunt Decent grumbled from morning till night. And yet there was no faltering of the confidence these charming Southerners had in the outcome. They made light of their make-shifts; they laughed at the privations they were forced to endure; they faced with courage what might be in store for them, predicting victory at the end.

Dorothea was in two minds whether to admire them for their fortitude or to question whether they had any realization of the seriousness of the times in which they were living. It seemed as if they gloried in scorning the thought that they might lose. That contingency they put away from them, as they did all other unpleasant facts. The English girl's first sight of these care-free people set her to wondering if they could ever be serious. She could not help but contrast this lightness with the different view of the matter held in the North, where a universal anxiety was met with on every hand. With their gay laughter all about her she had a remembrance of the sad face of Mr. Lincoln, who seemed to grieve for all the suffering, no matter on whom it fell.

"How can they win?" Dorothea asked herself.

"I tell you it's getting downright serious," she heard Val Tracy saying, as she brought her thoughts back to her surroundings. "The Yankees seem to know just what we mean to do and to prepare for it. There have been a dozen plans that have had to be abandoned. The South is full of spies!"

"And some of them are worse than that," April broke out passionately. "They are traitors!"

"Yes, that's right," her brother Hal put in. "We've just learned that there's a society all through

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the South that is growing more powerful every day. It's called the Red Strings."

"The Red Strings?" cried a half dozen voices at once.

"Where did you hear of them?" demanded Val Tracy.

"No matter," said Hal shortly; "but I'll tell you how they came to be organized. You all know that ever since the war began there have been a lot of cowards in this state, up in the North and East. There are more in Tennessee and some in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. Blackguards who voted for the Union, all of them! Well, when war was declared, you may be sure the first people our conscript officers went for were these half-Yankees; but they were mighty clever and took to the mountains. When the officers went away, back they came to their homes. They arranged it so that they were warned in ample time of any attempt to draft them, and pretty soon an organization grew up among them. This developed until it occurred to some one that here was a good crowd to help the Yankees and the Abolitionists. To-day they're scattered all over the South, and it's said there are a number of them in our army itself."

"The traitors!" cried April. "They should all be hung!"

"Maybe," said her brother, with a laugh, "but first you have to catch them. They're mighty slippery."

"But why are they called 'Red Strings'?" asked Miss Ivory, in her gentle voice.

"Because in the beginning," Hal explained, "they used to wear a piece of red, white and blue cord somewhere about them so they would know each other. But this was conspicuous and not easy to get,

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so they adopted just a piece of red ribbon — anything so it was red. A red string dyed with pine roots would do. And they took their name from that. They have passwords and signs, so they say; but anyhow this society, which began among the poor mountaineers, has come to be mighty powerful and is making all sorts of trouble for us. They are helping prisoners to escape from Andersonville and the other camps. They are doing all they can for the regular spies, and any information they get is sure to be sent North to the Yankees sooner or later. It's a bad business."

"Then we'll have to watch out for suspicious people who wear red strings," cried Val Tracy with a chuckle. "Ah, ha! I see one already. Miss Ivory has one about her neck."

There was a fine laugh at this.

"You had better keep an eye on me after this," said that gentle lady with a serious face.

"Ah, Miss Imogene," cried Val contritely, "'Twould give me joy — but I should as soon believe Mr. Davis a traitor as you."

Dorothea, suddenly conscious of some one staring at her, raised her eyes to find April's gaze fixed on the red velvet ribbon around her wrist, but at the same moment she noticed with a start of surprise that her beautiful cousin wore a thin red girdle about her waist.

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CHAPTER VII

THE BAYING OF THE HOUNDS

FOR a moment or two Dorothea lost all track of the animated conversation on all sides of her, then she became aware that the company were getting up from the table.

"I do hope," she heard Mrs. May saying, "that we are not going to begin to see spies wherever we look. All this silly talk of Red Strings is the product of some one's imagination. I don't believe there is any such society. It's absurd."

"I shall not cease to wear a red band about my throat, yet," Miss Imogene remarked lightly.

"Of course it's foolish to think that everybody who wears a red ribbon is a Red String," Hal laughed; "but all the same there is such an organization."

That seemed to end the matter for the time being. The whole gay party assembled in the great parlors and presently, one after another, near neighbors began to drop in. Among these was a Colonel Ransome of the Confederate Army and he brought news of another prisoner escaped from Andersonville.

"They say the fellow is working north through Georgia," he ended. "They sent me word to be on the lookout for him, so you boys can keep your eyes open."

"I don't blame any one for escaping from Andersonville!" exclaimed a Miss Perrine, a pretty Creole from Baton Rouge. "We passed the prison in the

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train. There's a gibbet at the gate of the stockade and they haven't even a roof over their poor heads. I say it isn't right! The creatures are more like animals than men. You could see that they were half starved."

"My dear young lady," Colonel Ransome demurred politely, "sympathy for our enemies does your heart much credit; but our prisoners are being treated as well as they deserve."

"You wouldn't like it if our own men were crowded together in the North as these are here," Miss Perrine maintained stoutly.

"Faith, these are Yankees!" Val Tracy said with a laugh. "Can it be that there is any young lady in the South who is sorry for a Yank under any circumstances?"

"There are some who are not," April cut in.

"All the same I don't think it's fair," Miss Perrine insisted. "We don't have to treat our prisoners that way. It was pitiful to see their hungry looks. We threw them some of our lunch, but it fell short and I suppose they will think we did it on purpose to tantalize them. I don't care what anybody says, they're human, even if they are hateful Yanks!"

"They are as well fed as our own soldiers," April insisted.

"And that isn't all of it, either," Colonel Ransome explained. "The North has refused to exchange prisoners, saying that Morgan's Raiders are criminals. So it's really their own fault."

"I say," Hal cut in, "let's stop talking and sing a bit. I hear enough of war all day."

They gathered about the piano at this suggestion and soon were shouting lustily the old songs so dear to all the South in those days. They began with

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"My Maryland," then came "The Bonny Blue Flag"; one favorite after another, and Dorothea, seated near the door, listened with great interest, impressed by the fervor of the singing. But it was not till some one called for "Dixie" that she had a real thrill.

"April must sing it, and we'll join in the chorus," cried Val Tracy, and the beautiful girl stood straight beside the piano and sang with all her heart in her voice:

"Southrons, hear your country call you!
Up, lest worse than death befall you!
To arms! To arms! To arms in Dixie!
Lo! All the beacon fires are lighted.
Let all hearts be now united.
To arms! To arms! To arms in Dixie!
Advance the flag in Dixie
Hurrah! Hurrah!
For Dixie's land we take our stand
And live and die for Dixie.
To arms! To arms!
And conquer peace for Dixie.
To arms! To arms!
And conquer peace for Dixie!"

The chorus rang strong and true at the end of each verse and when the last note sounded Val Tracy cried impetuously:

"If only the rascally Yankees could hear you, Miss April! They'd give up, knowing that we had such fair ones to spur us on to victory."

Meanwhile Dorothea watched April with a growing admiration, but not knowing the words of the song she could not join in the singing and her thoughts wandered. Unconsciously she turned toward a side window, for she had had the vague sensation of some one looking in; indeed as she glanced

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that way a face was pressed against the pane for an instant. It was the countenance of a man, and so pale, so haggard was it, that Dorothea nearly cried out with the sudden symypathy she felt. That the man, whoever he was, was suffering she had no doubt. The sunken cheeks and the shock of dark hair hanging down over the brow, threw into relief the thin white features appearing, as if out of a mist, against the blackness of the night. Only for a second did she see it, and then it vanished.

Instantly Dorothea's thoughts flew to Colonel Ransome's news of the Yankee prisoner escaped from the dreadful prison at Andersonville. Her first impulse had been to call Harriot's attention, but she curbed her tongue. The man did not appear to be in uniform, but when she stopped to think of the matter, she could not be sure of that. So momentary had been her glimpse of him that, had she not known herself to be awake, she might have convinced herself that she dreamed. She looked about her to note whether any one else had seen the intruder. But the others were still shouting at the top of their lungs, unmindful of all else, carried away with the fervor of their patriotism and love for the cause in which they believed with their whole hearts. None had seen the face at the window. At least, so far, the man was safe; and surely, if he was an escaped prisoner, as Dorothea was now convinced, he would know from the singing at what sort of a house he had stopped.

She then began to speculate upon the poor fellow's chances. She wondered if he were hungry and felt sure, from his face, that he was. She could do nothing to get him food, but perhaps some money might help him.

"Oh, if I could only do something for the poor

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soul," she thought to herself and, on the impulse, rose to her feet and slipped out into the hall unnoticed.

She had no very clear idea of just what she wanted to do. Her action was wholly governed by the sympathy aroused by the man's evident suffering. She opened the front door and ran lightly along the gallery until she came to the end of it, then peered round the corner toward the window where she had seen the face. The illumination inside had not been so bright that her eyes did not quickly accustom themselves to the darkness without, but she rubbed them to be sure that she was not mistaken, for there was no one in sight. In reality the time that had passed between her first glimpse of the mysterious man and her search for him was so very short that it was hard to believe that the stranger had vanished so quickly; however he was nowhere to be seen and, for his own sake, Dorothea dared not go farther.

Instead she turned swiftly to slip back into the house, but in so doing she ran into a figure hurrying along the gallery.

"Oh!" she cried involuntarily, stepping aside. For an instant she could not see who it was. "Is it you, April?" she asked, dimly making out her cousin's figure.

"Yes," came the answer, after a moment's hesitation. "I — I — what are you doing here, Dorothea?"

The English girl was not minded to explain, yet she disliked concealing the truth. On the other hand to tell this fanatical Southern girl that she believed an escaped prisoner had been there would be to put the man in jeopardy at once. A hue and cry after the poor fellow would be started, and Dorothea would do a good deal to avoid that. In the end she was not forced to answer.

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"Dorothea," April said breathlessly, coming nearer and lowering her voice, "please go in, and don't tell any one that I am out here. Please go."

Without a word Dorothea went, slipped back into her place unnoticed, but she was vastly puzzled over April's mysterious action, for it was impossible to believe that her Rebel cousin could have anything to do with an escaping Yankee prisoner. She shook her head as other explanations crowded in upon her, finding no satisfactory solution to the puzzle.

When at last her good-nights were said and Dorothea was back in her room making ready for bed, she quickly dismissed Lucy and sat down in front of the fire, her thoughts filled with the day's experiences.

That her welcome had been a hearty and a loving one she had no doubt. For her own part she felt a growing affection for these American relatives; but she was still greatly perplexed to find herself in the midst of so much gayety and laughter during a fiercely fought war. The face she had seen at the window was so filled with misery that the cheerfulness of her surroundings seemed not quite right and brought back to her mind a vivid recollection of the wretchedness she had witnessed on her brief passage through the Confederate Army. Could it be that those behind the Southern fighting line did not care what was happening to their soldiers?

She shook her head in denial of this possibility and was still puzzling the matter when there came a gentle knock at her door.

"Come in," she whispered, and Harriot tiptoed into the room with a plate of goober pralines in her hand.

"April would say we should be in bed," she announced in an undertone with a glance at the wall between the two rooms; "but when she has girls

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staying with her, she thinks it's all right if they sit up half the night, gossiping and giggling and eating pralines. She thinks we're children," she ended in a tone of disgust.

"Well, we're growing up," said Dorothea philosophically. "I'm nearly as tall as she is."

"And I had to have a band put around my skirts I've grown so," Harriot declared with a hint of pride. "They've been let down till there isn't any more material left to let!"

While Harriot was speaking Dorothea had become aware of a strange and menacing sound afar off.

"Listen, Harriot," she murmured, "what is that queer noise?"

"It's the hounds!" Harriot answered after a moment. "They're out after some one, and they seem to be getting nearer." She jumped up and, putting out the light, ran to the window.

"Hounds?" questioned Dorothea, going quickly to her side. "Do you mean dogs?"

"Yes, of course," Harriot replied. "They're out after some one. They use the hounds to track servants who run away."

"Would they use them to find that Yankee prisoner who had escaped?" Dorothea asked a little breathlessly.

"Oh, they're sure to. Maybe that's who they *are* after. Listen! They are coming nearer — I think I can hear horses galloping."

Undoubtedly the noises of the man-hunt were louder and Dorothea felt a clutch of pain at her heart. Was the poor man she saw at the window that night to be caught by hounds? She shuddered at the thought.

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CHAPTER VIII

INCREASING MYSTERY

THE baying of hounds and at length the rapid tread of horses' hoofs reached their ears, growing more distinct each instant.

"They are coming this way," Harriot murmured under her breath.

"Why should they come here?" Dorothea demanded, beginning to feel more and more apprehensive.

"I suppose somebody's servant has run away," Harriot answered, a little reluctantly. "Not ours," she hastened to add. "Our people wouldn't run away for anything. They're too well treated."

"Then there are some that aren't well treated?" Dorothea's tone was more coldly judicial than she knew.

"Oh, of course there are mean men everywhere," Harriot explained. "Father says the worst treated servants are those that are owned by other negroes."

"By other negroes," Dorothea echoed in amazement. "You mean that there are blacks who have slaves?"

Harriot nodded indifferently. This was no new idea to her and she could not quite understand Dorothea's surprise.

"Why, there isn't anything a negro would rather have than a slave of his own," she remarked. "Father says there are African tribes that were slave-owners long before —"

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"Yes, but they are savages and don't know any better," Dorothea interrupted.

Both girls entirely lost the significance of this remark, for by this time a company of horsemen had galloped into the May place and were pulling up on the drive.

The cousins, looking out of the window, could see the forms of mounted men and huge dogs moving here and there across the lawns below them. The low whines of the eager hounds as they snuffed about could be heard above the murmured talk among the men and the restless trampling of the horses. Whether these great beasts, trained for man-hunting, were after a slave or an escaping Union soldier she as yet did not know; but in either case it seemed a very horrible proceeding to Dorothea, and by so much her sympathy for the Southern cause was weakened.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a thundering knock at the front door, which echoed through the house, and in a moment there was a murmur of voices growing increasingly distinct. Hal May and Val Tracy could be heard talking earnestly to a stranger, but in so low a tone that the girls could not make out what it was all about. On either side of them, however, windows were opening and they knew that all the other members of the household were on the alert.

"Oh, I wish I were dressed!" Harriot cried, fidgeting about impatiently. "I wonder what they want here, anyway? They know we wouldn't help to run off anybody's servants. I'm going to slip something on and go down." She ran out of the room, leaving Dorothea alone at the window.

"Ladies," came the voice of Val Tracy as he stepped out on the lawn and called up to those at

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the windows above the gallery, "these gentlemen are out after a Yankee officer who has escaped from Andersonville. We have assured them that none of us has seen any one lurking about the place, but they insist that the fugitive was traced here and that they will feel more content if we inquire of you ladies whether or not you have seen anything out of the ordinary to-night?"

There was silence for a moment and in that short space of time Dorothea's mind was busy. She had no intention of volunteering any information as to what she had seen. She was convinced now of the correctness of her first impression — that the face she had beheld for a moment was that of the escaping officer. But instantly her thoughts flew again to April: Her cousin's distinct surprise at finding her out on the porch; her evident confusion and her final injunction to Dorothea not to say anything to the others of having seen her; all these things pointed to one explanation.

April knew as well as she that there was some one outside the house that night.

"But why," Dorothea speculated to herself, "should April shield a Yankee officer who was escaping?" and instantly she remembered the thin band of red in her cousin's girdle and the "Red Strings" of whom Hal had told them that night.

"Can April be a 'Red String'?" she asked herself. "Impossible!" she answered. April never lost an opportunity to proclaim her loyalty or to condemn the Yankees whom she apparently hated. Yet to seem excessively loyal would be the best way to keep her secret if she had one, was the next conclusion Dorothea reached — and this thought seemed to her an explanation of many things.

"At least I shan't tell anything, if I don't have

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to," she concluded and so waited for the next words from out of the darkness.

"No one saw anybody, I'm sure," she heard Mrs. May calling down to those on the lawn. "The hounds must have followed the wrong scent, and —"

"Were any of you ladies outside the house during the evening?" asked Val Tracy.

Here was a direct question that seemed to Dorothea aimed at her. Still, she held her tongue. April, as well as she, had been out and she waited for her cousin to answer.

"I saw Miss Drummond go out on the gallery," came the gentle voice of Miss Perrine. "Of course I don't say she saw anything, and probably she has forgotten she went out, but —"

"I was on the porch with Dorothea," April cut in, "and I saw no one."

"But did Dorothea see any one?" Hal demanded out of the darkness.

It seemed to her that the time had come when she must answer and she could not bring herself to lie deliberately. She hoped that the man she had seen was now far enough away to escape; but, whatever came of the matter, she could not deny that she had seen him if the direct question was put to her. Greatly to her surprise a voice beside her answered the question for her.

"Dorothea may have seen the same face at the window I saw." Dorothea turned and found beside her the figure of Miss Imogene, who had come into the room so silently that she had not noticed her till that minute.

"Then there was somebody!" cried a strange voice. "Where did he go?"

"Back to the quarters, I reckon," Miss Imogene answered calmly.

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"Back to the quarters!" was the disappointed murmur from below.

"We were singing and the negroes are always attracted by music," Miss Imogene explained; but at the same moment she put an arm about Dorothea's waist and drew her close to her. The girl felt instinctively an effort on the part of both Miss Imogene and April to intervene before she was forced to speak. She could not see the reasons for this. She was perplexed and puzzled at such evasion, but it satisfied her to remain silent, though why either of them should wish to shield an escaping Yankee was a mystery.

At that moment one of the great hounds lifted up its head and bayed dismally and in an instant the others, their noses close to the ground, made for the spot and joined in a chorus.

"They've found the scent again," some one cried. "Come on, men. If our bird was here he's gone on!"

There was a hurried beat of horses' hoofs as their riders wheeled and started at a gallop behind the dogs.

"Sorry to have disturbed you, ladies," came the voice of the leader out of the darkness, "but we have to catch this Yankee!"

The sounds of their rapid movements grew fainter and fainter and finally ceased as the men drew away.

At last all was silent again. And all the while Dorothea had stood beside Miss Imogene, wondering if the man she had seen would be taken, puzzled by the strange conflict and mystery which she felt surrounded her, getting no reasonable explanation for this obvious intervention by April and Miss Imogene to keep her in the background.

The woman beside her shivered a little and a long sigh escaped her lips.

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"I'm cold, child," she murmured, and releasing Dorothea went to the fire and held her tiny hands to the dying blaze.

The girl herself felt a chill in the air and, closing the window, went to the hearth for warmth.

"Shall I put on another log, Miss Imogene?" she asked.

"Do, honey," said the elder woman; "I don't know whether it's my nerves or the night air, but I haven't felt so chilly for a long time."

Dorothea put on another stick of wood and sat down at Miss Imogene's feet, watching while the fire kindled. It was plain that her companion was overwrought and she herself had no desire to talk. Her brain kept going over and over again the puzzling points in the night's experience and she could make neither head nor tail out of it all. Nor could she rid herself of the horror of these great dogs tearing across the country while the vision of the haggard face she had seen at the window still haunted her. Would they catch him at last? Would these mouthing hounds surround the poor fellow, perhaps in some swamp where he had fled, half dead with privations and hunger, to escape them? She, too, shivered at the thought.

"What is it, dear?" asked Miss Imogene, bending down to the girl at her feet.

"I can't help thinking of that poor man they are after," she answered in a low tone. "It seems so awful to hunt human beings with dogs."

"Don't worry," Miss Imogene consoled her. "I don't think they will catch *this* prisoner from Andersonville."

"But the dogs, Miss Imogene, they were on the track," Dorothea replied.

"On the wrong track, my dear," the elder lady

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answered, with a nervous little chuckle. "The wrong track."

"But how do you know?" demanded Dorothea, turning to look up into the face of Miss Imogene alight in the now blazing fire.

"For a woman's reason, 'because,'" the other answered evasively but with a bright smile as she stood up. "I must go back to bed, honey, and I advise you to stop thinking about runaway Yankees and get your beauty sleep."

Without another word Dorothea accompanied her visitor to the door.

"Good-night, honey," said Miss Imogene, kissing the girl with a genuine warmth. "We are going to be good friends, for I love you already, my child."

Dorothea closed the door behind her without a word. Once more her thoughts flew back to the matters that had been puzzling her all the evening. Miss Imogene wore a red band of velvet around her throat. Was she a "Red String"? The girl went back to the fire and seated herself once more in front of it, her eyes gazing into the flames leaping up the chimney, and her thoughts going over and over again the experiences of this first night in her new home.

But not yet had she come to the end of her perplexities. She heard voices whispering in the hall and then there came again a soft tapping on her door.

Dorothea guessed that it was April, and was not surprised when her beautiful cousin came in.

"I must talk to you a moment, Dorothea," April said, sitting down by the fire. There was something antagonistic in her manner, though Dorothea could not say wherein it was displayed. "I did not hear you say to-night that you had or had not seen anybody outside the house. Did you see any one?" The question was direct and, as she asked it, her

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eyes fell upon the red band of velvet about Dorothea's wrist.

Dorothea was at a loss what to reply. She believed that April was demanding an answer to something she knew already and could see no motive for it.

"I had rather not talk about that, April," she answered at last, with a smile. "Can't we forget all about it?"

"No," answered April, "no, we can't. You must remember, Dorothea, that we are at war. You say your sympathies are with the South. We believe you, but you seem to have evaded a direct question and — and — well, I want to know, so that there will be no doubt in my mind. Did you see some one?"

"Yes, I did," Dorothea answered. She felt that under any circumstances it would do no harm to the escaping officer if April knew. It was out of her hands now either to help or hinder the poor prisoner.

April's eyes widened.

"Why did you not tell them?" she demanded.

"Because," Dorothea replied firmly, "I did not have a chance, in the first place, and, in the second, I was in no hurry to be the means of setting dogs on a man, whoever he might be."

"You do not understand these things," April replied. "We have no other way of finding prisoners. But Cousin Imogene said it was one of the negroes."

"The man I saw was a white man," Dorothea answered.

"Then he was the one who escaped from Andersonville," April said, her voice rising a little. "You have helped a Yankee to escape! That is not the action of one who is in sympathy with the South."

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Again her eyes sought the red velvet band about Dorothea's wrist.

"It may have been a Yankee," Dorothea confessed, calmly. "I certainly thought so."

"And you were deliberately silent?" April spoke angrily. "You let one of our enemies get away when you might have helped to catch him? I tell you, Dorothea, we can't stand that. I shall tell Hal; it may not be too late to get word to the men who are searching." She rose to her feet.

"You are not fair, April," the other protested, rising also. "What were *you* doing on the porch? You said nothing of seeing any one any more than I did, and you must have —."

April's eyes widened in surprise for an instant and then, going close to her cousin, she whispered:

"What was the man like, Dorothea?"

"I only saw his face for a moment but it was very pale and haggard," Dorothea answered. "His hair was dark and there was a long lock that came down over his forehead. I think, too, that there was a small mole on his cheek, but that might have been a spot of mud. I can't tell you — "

She stopped abruptly, seeing a great change in her cousin's face. April had lost her look of anger and in its place there was an expression of profound sorrow, and her beautiful eyes filled with tears.

"I was mistaken, Dorothea," she faltered, half choking with some hidden emotion. "Forgive me."

She turned away and hurried out of the room, while Dorothea stood for a moment, gazing at the shut door and wondering what would happen next to deepen the mystery.

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CHAPTER IX

THE NEXT MORNING

DOROTHEA awoke next morning to find Harriot creeping into her bed.

"Good morning," she murmured, opening one sleepy eye.

"I hoped I wouldn't wake you," said Harriot briskly, "but, now that you are awake, we might just as well talk. I wanted to get you first to-day before the others. You're going to be mighty popular, I can see that, and you're my cousin just as much as you are April's."

She was under the covers by this time and snuggled down with a series of comfortable wiggles.

The mention of April brought back to Dorothea's mind the last glimpse she had had of her beautiful cousin the night before, and the events leading up to it.

"I wonder if they caught that poor man," she said, all sleep gone from her eyes by this time.

"Oh, I don't know. I hope not, though you mustn't say so to April," Harriot answered. "She's so patriotic and loyal that it hurts her. I hope I'll never have any love affairs."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Dorothea.

"I'm thinking of April," Harriot went on. "She used to be the nicest, sweetest girl you ever knew and now — she's a perfect idiot. Yes, she *is*,

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a perfect idiot. You just be warned by April and never have a love affair if you can help it."

"But perhaps you can't help it," Dorothea suggested with a smile.

"Well, I mean to," Harriot insisted. "I shall never fall in love. I've had my warning. It's awful! And I like Lee Hendon, too; even if he is a coward — though some people say he isn't at all."

"Who is he? Tell me about him, won't you?" asked Dorothea, thinking perhaps to find an explanation of April's actions.

"There isn't much to tell," Harriot replied. "April's so terribly pretty that of course she's had lots and lots of beaux, and I don't think any one noticed much about Lee Hendon — at least I didn't, 'cause he's been like a brother to us all his life and — well, when all the fuss came, there just couldn't be any other explanation except that April liked him better than the others."

"What fuss?" asked Dorothea.

"Because he didn't enlist when the war broke out," Harriot explained.

"Is he an Abolitionist?" Dorothea questioned.

"Oh, my, no! It would be almost better if he were. That would be a good reason for the way he's acting — not just 'cause he's afraid, as 'most everybody says. No, it isn't because he's an Abolitionist. He and his mother have three plantations and lots and lots of servants. At first, you know, a man who had twenty slaves didn't have to enlist — though of course *gentlemen* didn't wait to be made. My father and Hal went, right off; and so did 'most every one else. Then after a while the news went 'round that Lee Hendon hadn't gone and wasn't going. Oh, there was a lot of talk, and he sort of kept away as much as he could, till finally the girls

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sent him a Secession bonnet and a crinoline and skirt."

"And then what did he do?"

"Oh, I don't know," Harriot answered. "Nothing, I reckon. But Dr. Hardesty told everybody that it was Lee's mother who kept him at home. That she was mighty sick and if he went away she'd surely die. The doctor said we ought to admire Lee for not deserting his mother."

"I should have thought that would have satisfied April," Dorothea suggested.

"Nothing would satisfy her except that he should go and fight," answered Harriot. "But he wouldn't, and we heard he had paid a substitute three hundred dollars. That was the last straw. It's that sort of thing makes people say this is a 'Rich man's war but a poor man's fight,' and April cut him, on the steps of the church one Sunday morning, and she hasn't spoken of him since. All the same she keeps thinking about him, or else why is she so queer?"

"I didn't think she was queer," Dorothea remarked after a moment's pause.

"That's because you don't know how she used to be," Harriot replied. "Before, she used to laugh all the time and — oh, I don't know, but she wasn't so dreadfully grown-up and we had lots of fun together. Now she acts just like she loved going to Mothers' Meetings and sewing and all that kind of thing. You wouldn't understand, 'cause you didn't know her before, but I tell you she's mighty changed."

As if she had exhausted the topic of conversation Harriot snuggled down further under the covers and the first thing Dorothea knew her young cousin was fast asleep. Soon Dorothea herself

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drifted off into another nap, to be aroused a little later by hearing a soft puffing sound and a low-voiced humming in the room.

She lifted her head and there, before the fire, blowing it gently, was Lucy, her maid, singing softly to herself.

> "Mary and Marthy feed ma lambs,
> Feed ma lambs, feed ma lambs.
> Mary and Marthy feed ma lambs,
> Sittin' on the golden stair."

The verse finished, the colored girl turned her head and met Dorothea's glance, whereupon she smiled broadly and getting to her feet came to the side of the bed. Dorothea's sleepy eyes opened wide as she caught sight of a band of cheap red ribbon tying back Lucy's frizzy hair.

"Does my little missy want I shall bring her she's breakfus' in baid?" the smiling maid asked. "I've been wrastlin' with that pesky fire, tryin' to kindle it without wakin' you-all, but I 'spects that wood done come from a tree what was lightnin' struck, it ac' so contrary."

"Don't wake Miss Harriot," Dorothea cautioned in a whisper.

"Nothin' don't wake Miss Harry till she's ready to be woked," Lucy assured her. "Her old mammy always done said she was the sleepin'est and the eatin'est baby she ever set her two eyes on — and Miss Harry ain't outgrow it none."

"But hadn't I better go down to breakfast with my aunt?" Dorothea asked.

"Land sakes, honey," Lucy replied with a wide grin. "Ol' Miss had she's breakfus' hours and hours ago. She don't spressify what you must do.

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But ev'ybody pleases they' se'f heah, and that please Ol' Miss."

And then Harriot suddenly woke up. To Dorothea's mind she did this, not like a person rousing from a deep sleep, but rather like a wax doll whose eyes come open with a snap and who is suddenly wide awake.

Something of this she expressed to Harriot, who seemed rather annoyed thereby.

"I don't see anything in that to make a fuss about," she said, with a pout. "When I'm done sleeping, I'm done, and so I stop. When you've done eating no one expects you to go on chewing for an hour, do they? Now I want breakfast right away. We've lots to do this morning."

Lucy was at once dispatched for plenty of food for two, and then Dorothea inquired what was the pressing business a-foot.

"First thing, I must show you to my Cousin Corinne," Harriot explained. "You'll be a terrible disappointment to her. She thinks she's the only cousin I have handy, and she's always bragging to me about the Polks and the Morgans, who are kin to her but not to me. So I want you to put on a very pretty dress and I'll make Uncle Jastrow harness up and drive us over there in style, just like you were too proud to walk."

At this juncture the breakfast arrived and as Lucy set the tray upon the bed she implored the girls to be careful and not spill the salt.

"Is it so precious?" asked Dorothea.

"No, missy, 'tain't that," Lucy explained, "but land sakes, honey, it's most powerful bad luck."

Dorothea laughed.

"I don't believe in bad luck," she insisted, at which Lucy threw up her hands in horror.

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Even in this time of scarcity Aunt Decent had sent up food enough for three or four girls, though Harriot grumbled because there were no beaten biscuits, and brought the announcement from Lucy that white flour was so scarce that they were saving what was left for sick folks.

"An' youh ma she say if ever again she see the full of a bar'l of white flour at one time she's gwin' to give a party. Youh ma's mammy she took mighty good care to open up she's hands an put somepin' in 'em when she was a baby. So, nach'ly you ma she ain't close-fisted, nohow. What she's got, she shares."

Notwithstanding this lack of white biscuits the girls managed to make a very satisfactory meal, after which Harriot slipped into her dressing-gown to go back to her own room. But Dorothea stopped her.

"I've a lovely idea," she cried suddenly. "Why don't you wear one of my dresses and hats when we go to call on Corinne?"

Harriot seized on this suggestion with avidity.

"She might think we were strangers and give us fruit cake," she suggested. "No one can make fruit cake like Aunt Dilsey, even now she has nothing to make it of."

Dorothea's dress being long for Harriot gave her a more mature look, which led naturally to rearranging her hair and she was very shortly a quite grown-up Harriot who at once assumed airs to fit her fine raiment. Lucy, vastly entertained by these plans, lent her quick fingers to the task and when it was finished expressed herself satisfied.

"Foh de land's sake, Miss Harry!" she cried, stepping back to view her handiwork, "yoh sure is prettier than I eveh thought yoh could be. Lil' Miss

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betteh look out for she's beaux when you done come along dressed up."

"Don't be foolish," Harriot retorted, but she was pleased, nevertheless. The fact was that her dress of green cashmere with a sacque and hat of deeper hue were most becoming and she made a charming picture.

"Come," said Dorothea, "I want to show you off to Aunt Parthenia."

But at this Harriot demurred.

"Mother's apt to be mighty busy," she objected. "Wait till we come back."

She sent Lucy off with an order that Uncle Jastrow should harness up the carriage and drive them himself to go calling in state. Then they went down stairs to await their chariot. But when it came, Simeon was handling the reins. He was quite embarrassed and very apologetic for his lack of magnificence.

"Where is Uncle Jastrow?" demanded Harriot, bristling.

"Please, Miss Harry," Simeon answered, "I knows I ain't got no style, but Uncle Jastrow done say I was 'bliged to drive."

"But why?" Harriot insisted. "Is Uncle Jastrow sick?"

"No'm, he ain't sick ezackly," Simeon replied, "but he say, please, Miss Harry, won't you kindly be so good as not to blame him; but what with the horses quality company has rid off with to-day, and the horses Ol' Miss done sent on errants, not to speak of the horses General Wheeler's men pressed, they ain't nothin' lef' in the stables 'ceptin 'tis ole Mose. An' Uncle Jastrow he say he done kep' his moanin's to hisself when he come down f'om the granjure of four horses to drivin' only two, knowin'

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the war was makin' us all sort of equinomical; but he can't no way bemean hisself to one. He say yoh pa hisself wouldn't ask him to hol' the reins over only ole Mose, an' he ain't gwine' disgrace the fambly that a-way."

"Of course," said Harriot, turning to Dorothea, "it does seem sort of humiliating for Uncle Jastrow, seeing what he's used to driving. And I reckon he's right about father. But he's too proud of himself for all that. You would think that if we're not too grand to ride behind old Mose he might be able to drive him. But come along. We'll never get there if we don't start pretty soon. I haven't time to argue with Uncle Jastrow till we get back."

The girls entered the carriage and Simeon, summoning all the style of which he was possessed, whipped up old Mose and they drove off.

"Is Uncle Jastrow a slave?" asked Dorothea, considerably puzzled by what she had seen and heard.

"I wish you wouldn't say 'slave' as if you expected our people to walk about loaded with chains," Harriot remarked judicially. "That's what comes of reading 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' Mother says the horrid Yankees call their servants 'help' just to be different from us. Of course Uncle Jastrow is one of our servants, but he's so spoiled that he does just exactly what he wants. He bosses me and he bosses mother, and father just laughs at him. April's the only one can manage him. You know it's difficult to be dignified with an old man who knew you when you were a baby and can tell you just how fat you were."

As they rolled along through the sunshine a more peaceful scene could hardly be imagined. No one seeing these two pretty girls in fashionable attire,

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driven along the quiet road by a neat black coachman, even though it was behind the despised 'Ole Mose,' would ever have thought they were living in a country engaged in a deadly war.

It was not a long journey, and soon they came to the home of Mr. Charles Stewart, where Simeon, with his best imitation of Uncle Jastrow's grand manner, encouraged old Mose till he trotted up the driveway like a skittish colt. A little darky, on the watch for just such arrivals, sprang to the carriage and placed a cover over the wheel, and the two girls descended in state, spreading their gowns and preening themselves like peacocks.

But they had little chance to make an impression, for the front door was thrown hastily open and Corinne appeared, much excited.

"What do you think, Harriot?" she cried, taking no notice of either Dorothea or their finery; "Pa has just sent us word that the hateful English have repudiated the South. Whatever do you suppose we are going to do now?"

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CHAPTER X

A VISIT

AFTERWARD Dorothea thought how curious it was that Corinne's complaint of the "hateful English" had annoyed her so little. At the time she only felt abashed that the plans to surprise Harriot's cousin with their finery seemed to have fallen flat. Indeed, Corinne's announcement was a good deal like a dash of cold water in her guests' faces; but she was evidently so much impressed by this latest war news that she could think of nothing else. It was as if she did not see Dorothea at all, and was for going on excitedly when Harriot cut her short rather tartly.

"Corinne, this is my cousin, Dorothea Drummond," she explained. "Her father is English, but she's for the South no matter what their Government may do. And anyway it is our duty to be polite to the stranger within our gates."

Corinne smiled on Dorothea and for the first time seemed to realize that the girls before her deserved a more careful scrutiny. "I'm so glad you've come to visit us," she said, pleasantly enough, but quite formally. "I'm afraid you will find us very much upset since the war and quite behind the fashion."

"I hadn't noticed it," Dorothea answered with a glance at Harriot, who switched her wide skirt so that her cousin could not fail to observe it.

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Corinne, by this time, had begun to realize that this was no ordinary visit and her eyes widened as she grasped the magnificence of Harriot's apparel.

"I see Miss Drummond has been running the blockade," she remarked by no means cordially. "And you seem to have grown up very fast, Harriot. You know," she went on, turning to Dorothea with her most patronizing air, "we always think of Harriot as a little girl who cares more for cakes and candy than anything else."

If this was said to embarrass her cousin it had quite the opposite effect.

"Oh, that reminds me. Where is Aunt Cora?" she asked with an eager tone in her voice. "I think she wants to see us."

"My mother is much upset over this news from England," Corinne replied rather severely, making no move to invite them into the house. "You don't seem to comprehend the importance of it, Harriot. What we are going to do now that the British have refused to let us fit out vessels in their ports I don't see. You understand, don't you, Miss Drummond?" She asked the question as if it was hardly to be expected that the youthful Harriot could appreciate so mature a matter.

"Of course she understands and so do I," Harriot answered promptly. "But we'll get on somehow. England is not the only country in the world. You don't suppose our great Confederacy is so easy to defeat as that, do you?"

"'Our great Confederacy!'" Corinne wailed. "They've insulted us by calling it the 'so-called Confederacy,' as if it was nothing and we hadn't any right to it."

"I don't think it matters what they call it," Dorothea remarked, trying to seem sympathetic. She

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could not help feeling that Corinne lacked sincerity and that she was just repeating, parrot-like, what she had heard others say.

"Come on, let's go in," Harriot said, moving toward the door.

"Yes, do come in." Corinne's invitation was not enthusiastic, but Harriot, at least, cared nothing for that. "Ma will want to see you. She's having a trying time making up her mind what things she ought to take with her."

"Take with her?" echoed Harriot, standing in the doorway. "Where's she going?"

"She doesn't quite know," Corinne returned. "Either to Mexico or Brazil. She hasn't decided yet, but now that the South is beaten there isn't any place in this country for ladies and gentlemen to live. At least that's what Ma says."

"Fiddlesticks!" Harriot muttered, and marched into the house.

They found Mrs. Stewart in the parlor, sewing as if her life depended upon her speed.

"Harriot, my love, I'm overjoyed to see you," she greeted her niece in a tearful voice, hardly looking up from her work. "I'm making a running bag to tie inside my hoops. I shall put my diamonds in it when I go to Mexico. I suppose your mother has everything ready to leave?"

"Why, no, Aunt Cora," Harriot replied, going over and kissing the cheek upturned for her salute. "We hadn't heard of this English insult, but I don't think it will make any difference to us. I've brought my cousin, Dorothea Drummond, to call on you."

"How do you do, my dear," Mrs. Stewart murmured, stopping long enough to look up at Dorothea and hold out a couple of fingers. "You come among us in sad days. I don't know when we shall start,

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but it can't be long now. Do you know anything about Brazil, by any chance?"

Dorothea confessed that she did not.

"It seems very hard to find anybody that does," Mrs. Stewart went on, in the same melancholy way. "And yet Brazil is quite a well-known place, I'm told. And it certainly sounds more interesting than Mexico. It makes me think of birds, though I don't know why. However, we shall soon be flitting somewhere like the birds. And there's so much to be done. I was going to bury the silver yesterday; but then it occurred to me that I would have to dig up the whole garden to hide the spot from the negroes, and I really didn't feel equal to it last night."

"Aunt Cora," Harriot cried, "how can you say such things? You'll give Dorothea such a wrong impression. You know our servants are all loyal."

Mrs. Stewart wagged her head doubtfully over her sewing.

"I'm not so certain, honey," she insisted. "They have grown very insolent of late — but what's the difference now? My only trouble is that I can't make sure where we shall find the best society, in Brazil or in Mexico. I had made up my mind to London, but of course that's out of the question now."

"I should think it was!" Corinne cut in sharply.

"I don't fancy you'd find the society in London much changed," Dorothea could not refrain from remarking.

"Perhaps not," Mrs. Stewart replied doubtfully, "but it would never be the same to me. Under the circumstances I should not care to grace the London drawing rooms — not after the news we have just received. But let us forget our troubles for a while if we can. Ring the bell, honey," she went on to

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her daughter, "and order cake and wine. There is just one comfort I shall get out of this. I shall not hoard any longer. When I leave Washington I don't intend to leave anything behind me for the beggarly Yankees to eat or drink."

Harriot nudged Dorothea.

"Fruit cake," she whispered as Corinne pulled the bell rope. Aloud she said, "I don't see, Aunt Cora, what difference this English news makes. We all know that one Southerner is worth ten Yankees."

"Do you really think so, my dear?" her Aunt asked anxiously. "In that case perhaps I'd better not be so lavish. Corinne, you might go with Alice. Give her a glass of scuppernong wine for each of us and some seed cakes. I'll save the fruit cake a little longer."

She handed her daughter the keys to the storeroom and Dorothea could scarcely contain her laughter at the sight of Harriot's disgusted face as she watched Corinne hurry out of the room.

"Did you ever think, Mrs. Stewart," Dorothea began mischievously, "of quilting gold coins into a petticoat? They say you can carry a great deal of money that way and never be suspected."

At once Mrs. Stewart's fears were revived.

"That is a very good idea, my dear," she commented. "Harriot, my love, run and tell Corinne to bring us the fruit cake after all. We had much better enjoy it than have the Yankees gobbling it up."

Harriot did not wait to hear the end of the sentence. She was not minded to tarry and give her aunt an opportunity to change her mind once more.

"Honey," Mrs. Stewart began at once, the moment they were alone, "I sent Harriot away with Corinne on purpose. I have had some news that

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I am at a loss to know how to break to the family, and perhaps you can make some suggestion. It is not a matter to be gossiped about. Mrs. Hendon was buried yesterday afternoon!"

She stopped and looked at Dorothea as if she expected some demonstration of overwhelming surprise on the part of the young girl.

"Is that Mr. Lee Hendon's mother?" Dorothea asked calmly.

"Yes, my dear," came the hurried answer. "You've heard of the situation with April, of course? You couldn't be in the town five minutes without hearing of it, I'm sure."

"Yes, I have heard of it," said Dorothea. "Now that his poor mother is dead, everything will be all right, won't it?"

"You would think so, wouldn't you?" Mrs. Stewart hurried on, "but that's the awkward part of it. President Davis has passed a law that every white man of proper age who doesn't report for military duty is liable to death as a deserter. You see what that means?"

"No, I don't," Dorothea confessed.

"Well, my love, it's plain enough," Mrs. Stewart explained, as if to a very stupid child. "Lee Hendon never went back home from his mother's grave after the funeral yesterday afternoon. He has disappeared completely. No one knows where he is — and there can be only one explanation."

"You mean he has disappeared in order not to fight for the South?" Dorothea asked earnestly. She remembered the face she had seen at the window the night before and now realized the reason for the agony it expressed. He was alone, this poor Lee Hendon, with whom she had instinctively sympathized when first she had heard of him. He had

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stopped to see his sweetheart for the last time and then — But here her thoughts came to a sudden stop. April had been on the porch, too, last night. Of a sudden Dorothea thought she saw a clear explanation of all that had seemed mysterious to her. April was not a "Red String" after all. The lovers had met and parted.

"April must be told," she heard Mrs. Stewart saying, "and I don't know how the news is to be broken to her."

It was on the tip of Dorothea's tongue to say that Mrs. Stewart need not worry about April's knowing it; but instead she suggested speaking to Mrs. May as soon as she returned to the house.

"I think we had better go back as soon as possible," she ended. "Aunt Parthenia will know exactly what to do."

"You have an old head on young shoulders," Mrs. Stewart said approvingly. "Call me 'Aunt Cora,' dear — though I shan't be here long. I knew I should love you the moment I saw you." On the instant she seemed to have forgotten April's affairs and was back again on her own perplexities. "Do you think I might manage two running bags?" she went on, looking up with a wrinkled forehead as if the decision was a most momentous one. "Perhaps two would be too heavy. Still my hoops are good and wide and I've just had them repaired."

Dorothea gravely advised her about the bags.

"If I go to Brazil," Mrs. Stewart continued fretfully, "perhaps I'd better leave my diamonds and take my other jewelry instead. Diamonds are very common in Brazil, they tell me. Every one has them. They grow them there, I think; but I'm not sure of that. And then there's the matter of the climate. No one seems to know what it's really like.

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I wonder if Lee Hendon could possibly have gone there?"

Dorothea held up a warning finger. She heard the voices of the girls returning, and Mrs. Stewart, understanding, changed the subject at once without in the least changing the note of her complaining voice.

"Of course, war is war," she rambled on; "but what I always said from the first was that no one had any right to begin it unless they were sure they could win, and at the least they should have shown enough foresight to investigate the best places for us to go if we lost. A wise government would have let us all know whether Brazil or Mexico was the right place. But no! Nothing of that sort has been done, and the matter is left to the ladies to settle. However, whichever way I decide, your father, Corinne, will think we had better go to the other place."

"I don't believe Uncle Charlie will want to go away at all," Harriot remarked placidly, munching a piece of cake. "I don't see why he shouldn't stay right here the same as before."

"And do his own work like a common Yankee?" cried Corinne scornfully. "You forget that all the servants will be gone. I'd rather go to Brazil."

"You might pay the servants as we do in England," Dorothea suggested. "Papa says it is much cheaper in the end."

"My dear, how original!" Mrs. Stewart remarked, sewing at top speed. "Children, I hope you will give heed to your cousin. She has quite a mind, quite a mind indeed. Of course I don't see how we can house the servants and clothe them and feed them and pay them, too; but I'll certainly mention it to your Uncle Charles."

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She stopped abruptly to thread her needle and it was as if a river had suddenly ceased its soothing murmur.

A little later, Harriot having consumed the last piece of cake, the girls took their departure with promises to see each other soon again.

"What do you think," Harriot said under her breath, when they were well away from the house, "Lee Hendon's mother is dead and he's run away!"

"Why, how did you know that?" demanded Dorothea, thinking of Mrs. Stewart's secrecy in the matter.

"Corinne told me," Harriot explained. "Aunt Cora doesn't know and I didn't want to tell her, because she'll blab to everybody she sees, and —"

"Yes, she told me," Dorothea said, calmly. "She didn't want you to know till I had told Aunt Parthenia."

"Well!" cried the outraged Harriot. "I like that! As if I couldn't keep a secret better than Aunt Cora. At any rate, I don't see why it should be made such a mystery. April will be the last person in the town to find it out. No one will tell her, of course."

Dorothea turned and looked out across the country through which they were slowly driving. She was quite sure in her own mind that there would be no need of any one's telling April about Lee Hendon.

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CHAPTER XI

A KNOCK ON THE WINDOW

BY the time the girls had arrived at the May house once more they had reached the conclusion that Harriot should speak to her mother about Mrs. Hendon's death. Mrs. May could then determine whether she wanted to tell April or not.

"Of course, if she learns about it," Harriot said thoughtfully, "it'll spoil April's good time at the party to-night, though you would never guess it. She'd just be gayer than ever. But mother will know what's best to do about that."

Dorothea agreed that this was the wisest procedure and kept her own thoughts on the matter to herself. She had no wish to complicate an already delicate situation.

"But the news from England won't help to make the party a very gay one, I'm afraid," she remarked a little later.

"Oh, don't notice Corinne's foolishness; we wouldn't let any one think we cared about *that,*" Harriot replied scornfully. "If it is true that England won't recognize us any more, we can't help it; but we won't stop fighting. We'll fight all the harder. We aren't going to sit down and cry over it."

Dorothea, having grown up among people who took particular note of the more serious happenings

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in the world, had an adequate idea of the seriousness of this decision of the land of her birth. She did not believe that Harriot had any comprehension of how great a difference it would make to the Confederacy to have the British Government withhold all help and sympathy from the Southern cause. She appreciated that while the English people might still, and probably did, retain the same views upon the rights and wrongs of this war in America, and no doubt would continue to wish the South to win, that would not help rebel ships to refit in English ports — and where else was the South to go to replenish her fast disappearing resources?

"It *must* make a difference," Dorothea thought. "We shall have a pretty doleful party, in spite of what Harriot says." But she let her cousin talk on about the prospective gayety uncontradicted.

"Of course," said Harriot, "it won't be anything like our parties were before this war began, but we'll have a good time all the same and you needn't worry about partners."

Dorothea had heard a great deal about entertainments since her arrival the day before and it had set her wondering. There had been continual talk of dances to come, and references to balls at this or that place, until she had realized that nearly every night was an occasion for some sort of gayety that continued in spite of the fact that the country was suffering from want of food and clothing and that the brave fellows with whom the beautiful girls danced might lose their lives in battle the next day. She had not begun to think seriously over this phase of her new life, but after this news from England she expected some sign of a depressed spirit and would not have been surprised to find the evening's plans abandoned.

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The May household did not dress till after supper, which, in consequence, was a rather scrambled affair. The men had returned as usual, and there was the customary banter among them as they sat about the long table. In the center of this whirl was April, the leader in all the laughter, and Dorothea looked at her wonderingly, thinking of Lee Hendon. Could this bright girl keep up so courageous a spirit, knowing that her lover was suffering? Dorothea could scarcely believe it. Either her cousin did not care for Lee Hendon as was reported, or else she had met him and had given him the consolation he stood so much in need of, if he could be judged from the glimpse she had had of him through the window.

But on her way upstairs to dress she caught sight of April's face when her cousin was off her guard, and it wore a look of misery. Dorothea went straight to her room, assailed with new doubts, finding now no explanation that would satisfy against this evidence of a hidden sorrow.

Lucy was on her knees before the fire, setting slippers and silk stockings to warm. The pretty colored girl was vastly proud of her new young lady's magnificent possessions. At the moment, however, she had a grievance.

"Missy, honey," she began complainingly, "when yoh comes in, cain't yoh ring for Lucy, please, to take youh hat and sacque?"

"But I don't always need you, Lucy," Dorothea replied with a smile.

"'Deed, missy, yoh needs me more'n yoh knows of," the girl went on. "When I comes up here what does I find? Youh hat on the baid!"

"I thought I could put it away later," Dorothea said, not at all understanding Lucy's complaint.

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"'Deed, missy, 'at's what Lucy's for — to put away youh pretties," the girl replied, evidently still more distressed. "Don't yoh know yoh must never put youh hat on the baid?"

"I don't think it will hurt the bed," Dorothea laughed back.

"I ain't thinking of the baid, Missy," Lucy explained. "It's you, you'self, what's gwine to have a big disappointment if you-all puts youh hat on the baid. Don't ever forget that, missy, and please ring for Lucy nex' time."

"All right, Lucy," Dorothea answered mock-seriously. "Next time I'll put my hat on the floor if I don't ring for you."

"Thank yoh, missy, I sho' will be grateful," answered Lucy so earnestly that Dorothea looked at her, surprised at her tone.

"Do you really believe in luck, Lucy?" Dorothea asked idly, as the girl was brushing her hair.

"Does I believes in luck!" exclaimed Lucy. She held up her hands in amazement. "Does I believes in luck? No'm, I don't believes in it, I knows it! Didn't I see the new moon over my right shoulder and nex' day didn't Ole Miss send me for to take care of yoh?"

"I'm not sure that was luck, Lucy," Dorothea could not help saying. "At any rate, I can't see what the moon had to do with it."

"The moon's got a lot to do with luck, baby!" Lucy insisted. "Yoh kills a hog when the moon's dwindlin' and the meat's gwine to dwine away to 'mos' nothin' when yoh puts it in the pot. Now nobody won't say a rabbit's foot off 'en a rabbit what was shot runnin' 'cross a man's grave of a Friday in the dark of the moon ain't boun' to be lucky. 'Cept 'tis foh that one thing, Friday's a mighty un-

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lucky day. You don't want to start nothin' on a Friday, honey."

"I'll try to remember," said Dorothea, much amused, but keeping a sober face. "What else mustn't I do, Lucy?"

"Well, missy, thehe's lots o' things it ain't 'zackly good to do," the girl, launched on a favorite subject, went on, brushing vigorously the while. "Yoh mustn't get out of the wrong side of the baid in the mornin'. An' if yoh puts on a stockin' wrong side out yoh mus' wear it awhile befoh yoh change it — but then, you'he boun' to change it befoh eleven o'clock, less 'en yoh wants somethin' bad to happen."

"If that's all, I'll try to remember," Dorothea answered lightly.

"Land sakes! Is that all, says you?" Lucy cried. "No'm, they's heaps and heaps more, but I'll tell 'em to yoh as they comes along. Yoh sho'ly would forget some of 'em if I told all of 'em to oncet."

Her hair finished, Dorothea held out a foot for a satin slipper.

"Lef' foot first, missy," Lucy said pleadingly. "It's luckier that a way somehow."

So it went on till Dorothea was dressed, but she was in no hurry to go down till the music told her the dancing had begun, and seated herself near the candle. Taking up a book, she accidentally brushed the paper knife off the table.

"That means a gem'man' comin' to see yoh," Lucy remarked as she picked it up.

"We'll not bother over him till he's here," Dorothea replied with a laugh. "You needn't wait, Lucy. I'll not need you again."

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"I'll be on the landin', missy, to shake out youh ruffles an' spread youh ribbons befoh yoh go down staihs. But they's somethin' on my mind, honey, I wants to ask yoh about."

"What is it?" Dorothea asked. "You don't have to be afraid of me, do you?"

"I isn't 'zackly afeared," Lucy explained. "I knows I ain't stylish, lak Merry, but I've been a house gal wearin' shoes fouh years now."

She interrupted herself, a new thought striking her.

"Please, missy, what is it mannehs foh Lucy to call you? Ol' Miss is Ol' Miss and Lil' Miss is Lil' Miss, and Miss Harriot is Miss Harry, but foh a fac' I don't know what yoh is, and I been a studyin' about it a heap."

"I'm Miss Dorothea, I suppose," Dorothea suggested.

Lucy shook her head.

"That's a high bo'n quality name," she replied doubtfully, "but they ain't none of us can say it lak it should be said. I laid awake half the night a-practicin' and a-practicin', an' I ain't got up the courage yet. It's too much granjure for my tongue, I reckon."

"What would you like to call me?" Dorothea questioned. "I should like you to call me whatever you please."

Lucy heaved a great sigh of relief.

"Then I'll say Miss Dee, honey," she announced, "jes' lak I'd knowed yoh f'om a baby."

She stopped and Dorothea expected her to go away, but she still lingered.

"Is there something more, Lucy?" she asked.

"Yes'm, Miss Dee, there is," the girl confessed

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with marked hestitation, but in a moment it came out with a rush. "Miss Dee, is you-all some sort of a Yankee?"

"No, not any kind," Dorothea answered with a smile. "My mother was your Old Miss's sister, but my father is a Scot and we live in England, or at least we have always called England our home."

Lucy was evidently disappointed.

"Then you can't tell me what the Yankees is gwine to do with we-all when we's free," she murmured half to herself.

Dorothea shook her head.

"The North has first to win the war, Lucy," she answered. "If they do, you will have to take care of yourselves and earn your own livings like white people, I suppose."

"An' how's we-all gwine to do that without any white-folks learnin'?" demanded the girl.

"Oh, you could do it by taking care of some one as you do of me," Dorothea explained.

Lucy's eyes widened.

"Do they pay real money up No'th just for brushin' hair and foldin' up youh pretties?" she asked excitedly. "An' could I be free too? But I guess you must mean Confedrit money, Miss Dee. You don't know there's a sayin' that a whole bahrel full of it won't pay foh the bunghole."

"My father pays a maid at home to take care of me," Dorothea pointed out, with a laugh. "But I don't think she's any better off than you are."

"That's what Merry's always a-sayin'," Lucy agreed.

"I would be quite satisfied if I were you," said Dorothea. "You are as comfortable now as you are ever likely to be."

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"Yes'm, that's what I think — but what's I gwine to do if some of 'em meddlin' Yankees come along and set me free? That's what I'm askin' yoh."

Lucy was still grumbling to herself as she moved out of the room. Dorothea watched her go, realizing another of the problems of the South for the first time, and getting a hint of the state of mind of the slaves, who had so vague an idea of what their future was to be.

She sat for a moment, but the flapping of the curtain in front of the window annoyed her and, going to it, she closed the sash so that the wind might not blow in. Then she went back to her book by the table and tried to read.

She had scarcely turned a page, however, when she was startled by three short raps upon the window pane and, turning toward it, she saw a hand reaching up from below ready to tap again.

For an instant Dorothea's heart jumped with apprehension, and then she thought of Lee Hendon and all fear left her. She ran to the window and, lifting it again, leaned out. As she expected, the dark form of a man cowered on the gallery roof below the window ledge.

A pale face looked up at her in the darkness.

Lucy's prophecy as a result of the falling knife had come true. Here indeed was a stranger come to see her.

"Water!" came a croaking sound from the figure. "Water!"

Dorothea ran back to the stand and poured out a glassful, carrying it to the window. The upstretched hand grasped it, and the man gulped the contents.

"More," he muttered hoarsely and again she filled the glass.

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"Have you any food?" the man questioned after he had drunk the second measure.

Dorothea shook her head. Then her face brightened.

"Yes, I have, too," she whispered. "I've some chocolate. It's a part of the French soldier's rations, so I fancy it won't hurt you. I'll get it for you."

The man consumed what she gave him ravenously and showed an immediate improvement in his condition.

"Food puts life into a man," he said. "I've had nothing to eat since yesterday, and only a little parched corn then. Now, young lady, how am I to get away from here?"

"Really I don't know," Dorothea answered hesitatingly. "After all, isn't that your own affair?"

"They told me I should find some one to help me at this house," he answered. "When I saw your hand as you opened the window just now I knew where to ask. I've been lying here since the hounds chased me yesterday evening."

"Then you're not Lee Hendon," Dorothea whispered half to herself. "Oh," she went on a little louder, "are you escaping from the prison?"

"Yes," the man answered. "Didn't you know that? They told me I could expect help here. You must be the one. I saw the band on your wrist."

His voice was weak and faint in the darkness as he crouched against the wall, and it came up to her only in jerks as if it was difficult for him to speak.

Dorothea started, here was prompt confirmation of Hal's story. Evidently there was a "Red String" in the house somewhere, but who could it be? The place was full almost to overflowing with Confederate sympathizers, among whom were many

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Rebel officers. Yet the man must be saved, even if she had to do it herself.

"Wait a moment," she whispered into the darkness. "You shall be helped to freedom if it is possible."

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CHAPTER XII

THE MAN ON THE ROOF

DOROTHEA was about to leave the window but she was by no means certain what she could do, although she was fully determined to help this poor soldier to his freedom. It was quite plain that he had expected assistance from some one in the house; but who could it be, this Red String in whom she, herself, would now be glad to confide? She had strongly suspected April when she had first heard of this mysterious band of Northern sympathizers, but her cousin's action which had led to this conclusion could all be explained by Lee Hendon's presence outside the house on the previous night. Dorothea decided then and there that April was not a Red String.

Miss Imogene wore a velvet band about her neck, but Dorothea, like Val Tracy, felt that here was one above suspicion. Yet there was some one who would give her the help she needed to save the wretched man upon the roof if she could but divine who it was.

While she still debated the matter in her mind, his voice came to her out of the darkness.

"If you could get me some food it would be the best thing that could happen to me," it said.

"I don't know how I'm going to do it," Dorothea answered. "You see, they are having a ball down stairs, and probably all the servants are busy, and —"

She was halted by the first strains of the music coming up to them from the parlors below.

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"Have you nothing in your room?" the man asked, weakly.

"Nothing but the chocolate I gave you — which you have eaten," Dorothea answered, and at that moment there came a knock at the door.

Dorothea closed the window softly and crossed the room.

"Who is it?" she asked, controlling her voice as well as she could.

"Please, Miss Dee, Ol' Miss is askin' where yoh-all is?" came Lucy's voice.

Instantly Dorothea remembered the bright red ribbon in the girl's hair. That there were negroes in this band of Red Strings was certain, seeing how necessary their assistance would be if anything secret was to be done in the South. She was on the point of taking the maid into her confidence when a doubt assailed her. Could she be sure of Lucy? Reluctantly she shook her head. She dared not make a mistake; the freedom, perhaps the life, of the man on the roof depended upon her and she could leave nothing to chance.

"I'll be down shortly," she called softly through the door, "and, Lucy," she went on, with a sudden inspiration, "can't you get me some sandwiches and a glass of wine? I didn't eat much supper and —"

"And yoh is faint wif excitement," Lucy finished for her. "Yes'm, yoh jes' stay there and I'll have somefin' up foh yoh in a jiffy," and Dorothea heard the girl hurry away.

Going back to the window she opened it again and whispered what she had done.

"It's the best I can manage at present," she ended.

"It will be a great help," the man replied. "If I could just have a bit of sleep and a chance to dress a wound I received getting out of Andersonville, I

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wouldn't have to bother you further. I'm sorry to give you so much trouble."

Perhaps the prospect of food gave the man hope but, whatever the reason, he spoke in a stronger voice and in the unmistakable accents of a gentleman.

Evidently he was an officer, and Dorothea peered down in the darkness trying to catch a glimpse of his features, but it was too dark to see more than a darker shadow crouched against the wall.

"Listen," she elaborated her plans as she talked, "as soon as my maid comes back I shall put out the candle and go down stairs. My aunt has sent for me and if I don't appear shortly she or my cousins will come after me. When the light is out you can slip into the room, and for some hours you will be safe here. I shall not come back till the dance is over, which I suppose will be nearly morning. Can you manage this, do you think?"

"Easily," came the quiet answer. "You couldn't have arranged it better. With a little more strength I can get on, now that the dogs are off the trail.

"Tell me," he added, "which of the rooms with windows opening on this roof belong to men?"

"The one at the very end," Dorothea answered. "That's Hal May's room."

"That will do very well, thank you," came the whispered answer. "I shall make that my resting place so you'll have no cause to worry about coming back to your room whenever you want to. I will take the food, then be off. Thank you a thousand times."

"Is there nothing else I can do for you?" Dorothea asked hurriedly. Somehow she had grown to have something of a personal interest in this man on the roof. She hadn't seen his face, and she was by

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no means sympathetic with his cause. But he was wounded and in danger of going back to Andersonville Prison, which she had heard Southerners themselves acknowledge was far from a cheerful place. She would do what she could to help him escape.

"No, not a thing," he answered back.

"Very well then," she went on. "I shall leave some handkerchiefs on the washstand for your wound. That's the best linen I have. You can come in and warm up by the fire, where I'll put the sandwiches and wine. I hope you get—"

She did not finish the sentence, for again a knock came at the door and Lucy's voice reached her.

"Miss Dee, please—"

She ran across the room and, opening the door a crack, took the plate and glass out of the astonished girl's hands.

"Wait for me on the stairs," Dorothea ordered. "I shall be going down in a moment."

She saw Lucy's eyes widen with surprise, but there was no time to invent excuses. She knew that if she did not shortly make an appearance some of the family would be up looking for her, so she hurried back to the hearth and placed the plate and wine in the fire-light. Then, tiptoeing to the window, she opened it full.

"I'm going," she whispered; and the next moment she had blown out the candle and closed the door behind her with some little noise.

Lucy was not far away and as Dorothea submitted to the final fluffing of her ruffles she assured her anxious maid that she was quite well and that it would not be necessary for Lucy to take the tray till morning.

"I didn't eat everything," she remarked. "Perhaps I shall want a sandwich before I go to bed."

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She did her best to conceal her anxiety for the man on the roof. If he held to his plan to stay but a few moments in her room and then make his way to Hal's to rest, she felt he had a good chance to escape undetected; but she would be on pins and needles for a while. However she did not mean to show that she was not entirely herself, and sailed down the stairs and into the parlor with as composed a face as she could muster. And she made a pretty picture in her wide Suisse dress and fresh crisp ruffles, conscious that, although her clothes were not excessively magnificent they would appear rich in comparison with the other girls', who were forced by the war to wear gowns which had been turned and remade again and again.

Lucy, standing with the other servants on the outskirts of the hall, voiced her pride loudly.

"Ain't Miss Dee the prettiest an' the sweetest little lady heah?" she demanded of Merry beside her. "I jes lak to set her up on a pedistool and let yoh-all have a look at her. She's little foots got a arch on 'em yoh could let water run under and never wet the sole. 'Tain't no field-han's foot I'm tellin' yoh, and her waist's that tenchy I don't have to pull her laces while she hol's her bref. An' eve'y las' one of her clo's is jes' kivered wif real lace! That's right! I ain't sayin' a word but the truf."

"Fine feathehs make fine birds," Merry sniffed scornfully. She was jealous of any one who might dare to hint at rivaling her young mistress. "Yoh can talk all yoh's a-mind to about she's clo's, but what I's looking at is she's hair. Jes' common black, 'tain't sure enough gold lak Lil' Miss'!"

Dorothea slipped into the parlor, to be captured at once by Mrs. Stewart who was talking to Val Tracy. The elder woman held out a compelling hand to her,

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without stopping the steady flow of her conversation.

"It may be as you say," she was complaining in her usual tone. "I'll certainly ask Colonel Stewart to inquire into it, and if you are right perhaps Peru is the best place for us to go, after all. But it's strange I never heard of the Incas if they are as old a family as the Polks. Probably they are just nouveaux riches. . . . Kiss your Aunt Cora, dear," she went on to Dorothea with scarcely a break in the easy flow of her words. "That dress is too sweet and lovely. I think I'll have to copy it for Corinne. She has been complaining that she hasn't anything fit to wear, but I tell her, 'what's the use if we are going to Mexico?' And now it may be Peru and that's further still, isn't it, Val?"

"I believe it is," Tracy remarked, with a twinkling glance toward Dorothea; "but you might stop at Mexico on the way and see how you liked it. Mayn't I have this dance, Miss Drummond?" he ended, turning to the girl whose feet were already in motion to the gallop the negro musicians from the quarter had struck up.

Dorothea nodded and in a moment they were off together.

"I think you like to dance," Tracy murmured after they had gone half round the room.

"I do like it," Dorothea answered; "but I haven't had much practice, and perhaps I don't do it very well. You see at home, in England, they think I'm too young to go to dances yet."

"You're a very fairy on your toes," Val assured her.

Dorothea laughed joyously.

"I should like to believe so," she answered, "but I'm afraid I can't take your word for it, can I?"

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"Oh, Miss Drummond," Val replied with mock despair. "Could you doubt me?"

"I can hardly be expected to have much faith in what you say after what I heard you telling Mrs. Stewart about the Incas of Peru," Dorothea replied.

"Faith, I but told her the truth," he grinned. "They are the oldest family I know of in this hemisphere; and as for your dancing, save one dance I have with Miss Imogene, I'll be pleased to dance with you all night."

"That would hardly please Miss Imogene," Dorothea replied, shaking her head.

"Aye, and there's something in that," Tracy agreed. "Is she not a wonder now? On the other side she'd be wearin' a cap and spectacles and sittin' by the chimney corner knittin'. But here — faith, she's the light of every party! Were I a little younger I'd be askin' her to marry me, this night; but seein' I'm all of twenty-three I've grave fears I'd age too fast for her."

Val Tracy with his raillery kept Dorothea's mind off the man upstairs for the time being, but when the music stopped her thoughts flew back to him with a sudden thump at her heart.

"He must have gone to Hal's room by this time," she said to herself, not knowing whether to be glad or more anxious on that account. A moment later she was claimed by another partner and for a while was so busy trying to remember the names of all the new people to whom she was introduced that she had little time for anything else.

April, more radiant and beautiful than ever, had an eye upon her cousin and saw to it that she did not lack partners.

"I hope you are having a good time, Dorothea,"

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she said, upon one occasion, with one of her most beaming smiles.

Dorothea thanked her and smiled back, with an open admiration that she could not have concealed if she had been so minded. April needed no imported finery to set off her charms and no one at the party had any doubt about who was the belle of it. But as she watched her dancing with the Confederate officers and heard her leading all the most patriotic songs of the South; when she saw her cousin's eyes kindle with enthusiasm at the mention of the Cause for which a rebel army was fighting, it was impossible to believe April a member of this band of Red Strings of which she had become so intimately aware. The thought that it was Lee Hendon who was the mainspring of her actions grew to a conviction.

Time for such reflections came to Dorothea only now and then. She was never left to herself, but Val Tracy came for another dance which she was ready enough to give. She liked the young Irishman as did every one, apparently, and it occurred to her that he might help her solve some of the puzzling questions that had begun to throw a shadow of doubt upon her loyalty to the Southern cause.

"Tell me, Mr. Tracy," she asked quietly, "do they always set bloodhounds on escaping prisoners down here?"

He looked at her a moment quizzically.

"You didn't like it, eh?" he said finally. "Well, to tell you the truth, Miss Drummond, I'm not what you'd call keen about it meself. Faith, this catchin' man with dogs —!" He shook his head vigorously.

"It's very cruel," Dorothea murmured, half to herself.

"Ah, but, Miss Drummond," Tracy answered, "you must remember that they have been doing it in

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this country for years and years and they don't see any harm in it. You must take things as you find them, I suppose; though I confess this huntin' men with hounds goes against the grain with me."

"Will they catch him, do you think?" she questioned, more anxiously than he could possibly know.

"There aren't many escape safely from Andersonville," he answered. "Some of them do get out; but they're brought back sooner or later, poor creatures."

"Why do you have such prisons?" Dorothea demanded almost angrily.

"Nay, Miss Drummond," he returned quickly, "don't blame me for these prisons. They're none of mine. I'm only a small cog in a very big wheel; but to tell the truth the problem isn't as easy a one to solve as you'd think. We can't give our own men enough food and clothes, so you'd hardly expect the prisoners to fare better."

Dorothea was about to reply when Hal May came hurriedly across the dancing floor and stopped beside them.

"Val," he said, under his breath, "you'll have to excuse yourself to Dorothea. You'll let him go, won't you?" he went on directly to the girl. "Fielding, who was out last night after that escaped officer, is back again and wants to see us. I told him we'd talk to him in my bed chamber, upstairs. It was the only private spot I could think of. Take Dorothea to mother, and join us as quickly as you can." Hal went away hurriedly and Tracy started across the room toward where Mrs. May was sitting with some of the elder ladies.

Dorothea walked beside him mechanically. The man upstairs was lost. They would come upon him, sleeping in Hal's room, and the poor fellow would

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have to go back to the prison horrors from which he had tried, so desperately, to escape. And there was nothing she could do. Already, she supposed, Hal and the man Fielding were upstairs. She shrank from contact with these chattering people. She wanted to be alone, to think of some way of escape for the poor man if she could.

"I don't wish to go to Aunt 'Thenia for a moment," she whispered, when they were half way across the room. "I would rather go out on the gallery for a breath of air."

He looked at her sharply, and noted that her face had suddenly grown pale.

"Aren't you feeling well?" he asked with a touch of anxiety in his voice.

For an instant it occurred to her that by saying "yes" she could keep him at her side. Then she realized the uselessness of this. Tracy was only one. No doubt Hal had summoned other officers to the conference and probably the man was already taken.

"It's the heat I'm unused to; I shall be all right in a moment," she answered, and with that he left her and she took her way unnoticed out on to the broad porch.

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CHAPTER XIII

A FRIEND IN NEED

DOROTHEA had no definite plan in her mind when she went out on the long dark gallery. Her only desire was to be alone for a while to try to think of some way to aid the poor prisoner upstairs. But it required no reflection to show her that she was quite powerless. The case, as she saw it, was hopeless. The man was, in all probability, a prisoner already and would be justified in thinking that she herself had taken a hand in his recapture.

She could see only one possibility of his escaping. If he was wakened in time he might be able to get out on the roof again and continue in hiding. She halted suddenly, an impulse coming to her to run upstairs and try to warn him, but she shook her head. Common sense told her it was too late to do anything.

She turned a corner of the house and looked out upon the lawn. There, dim shadows in the darkness, she could see the forms of several horses, and walking slowly up and down, with his gaze fixed upon the piazza roof, was a soldierly figure, intently watching. She stopped, half hidden by the turn in the house, and waited.

In a moment or two she heard a window raised in one of the rooms above.

"Are you down there, Mason?" It was Hal's voice, pitched low.

"Yes, sir," came the answer from the man pacing slowly across the lawn.

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"Keep your eye open," Hal called down. "I'm going to take a look along the roof here."

Dorothea heard her cousin clamber out of the window and, a moment later, the creaking of the tin as he tiptoed over her head. She held her hand to her heart, tense with excitement, and dreading the outcome. From this move on Hal's part she argued that the Confederate officers had not yet found their man. Perhaps he had gotten away, after all.

Her rising hope that this was true was confirmed by her cousin who called softly that there was no one on the roof. The girl's spirits rose with a bound. The man was gone and she was more glad than she would have thought possible. He was an enemy of those with whom her sympathy lay. She still believed in the cause the South was fighting for. Yet for all that she could not help rejoicing that this man had escaped; indeed she felt like dancing. The music in the parlors called her and she turned to go back.

"It's because they send hounds after them," she thought to herself, trying to explain her perplexing state of mind. She would have denied with perfect sincerity that she wished the North to win the war, but she could not hide from herself the fact that she had seen things that had dulled the keen edge of her enthusiasm for the Confederate Cause.

As she was about to step through the doorway into the house she ran sharply into April coming out hurriedly. Both girls drew back and for an instant eyed each other in silence.

"I am sorry if you are not having a good time," April said at length, with a touch of asperity in her tone. "I missed you and was wondering where you were."

"Oh, but I was enjoying myself," Dorothea strove

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to put enthusiasm in her words. "I just came out for a little air."

April turned to go back into the parlor.

"You seem fond of the porch in the evenings," she remarked over her shoulder, but there was no accompanying smile and Dorothea felt that a barrier of some sort had sprung up between them. For all that she was not convinced that her cousin's errand was to seek her. She wondered at once if April knew what was going on upstairs. Perhaps, after all, this beautiful cousin had had a hand in the prisoner's escape and was coming out to see if all were well. She could not be sure and again felt herself to be in the midst of affairs which she could not explain.

Then, as she was about to make her way into the parlors her heart gave a great thump with a realization of the possibility that the Union soldier might still be in her room. In that case he must be warned before a search of the whole house was made.

With this in mind she hurried up the stairs, crossed the hall, and closed her door softly behind her. She heard the murmur of men's voices coming from Hal's quarters, but knew no one had seen her.

Inside, the window was open, a dull fire still burned in the hearth, but she noted that the sandwiches and wine remained as she had left them, untouched. Evidently, she thought, the man had not had time to eat before he was forced to leave. She crossed the room, intending to shut the window but, ere she reached it, her eyes fell upon a dark heap on the floor beside her bed. She halted, looking down with a sudden fear in her heart and then breathed a sigh of relief.

"He took a disguise and left his clothes here," she half murmured to herself. But, when she

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stooped down to examine the meager bundle more closely, she saw that there was a man still in the shabby uniform, a man so thin and wasted as to be little more than a skeleton.

She thought at first that he was dead, but, snatching her hand-glass, she held it in front of his parched lips and found it clouded. The man was alive, how long he could remain so she dared not think. In the half light from the fire, to her inexperienced eyes, he looked as if each succeeding minute might easily be his last.

But what was she to do now? Whom could she trust? Certainly none of the servants, who would probably scream in terror and alarm the entire household at the first sight of the poor, huddled body. Her mind was busy with this problem, but instinctively she had taken the glass of wine and was trying to force a little of it through the pale lips, when there came a knock at her door.

Instantly she was on her feet, her nerves taut; but by no means ready to give up without a fight. So far her part had been passive, now that the man could no longer help himself she meant to try her utmost to save him. That it was Hal or Val Tracy coming on a search of the house, she had no doubt. However they would not enter so long as she was there, and she vowed to herself that she would remain in the room till Doomsday rather than let either of them in.

"Who is it?" she asked, and expected to hear the deep voice of one of the men, but greatly to her consternation the door was opened and in walked Miss Imogene.

"It is I, honey," said the dainty little lady, closing the door behind her and advancing into the room. "What are you doing here in the dark?"

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"I just came up for a moment," Dorothea replied, without a tremor in her voice. Here was a more dangerous situation even than she had anticipated and her wits were working fast to meet it. "I will go down with you at once." She made a motion as if to start for the door, hoping that Miss Ivory would take the hint and go out too; but the latter evidently had no such intention for she stood before the fireplace, placing a dainty foot upon the fender to warm it before the fitful blaze.

"Do put another log on the fire, child," she requested. "My toes are icy and — my dear, I want a little chat with you. I don't think you can be enjoying your party — hiding alone up here."

"Oh, but really I have been — indeed I have been," Dorothea protested. "I just came up —"

"For the same reason you went out on the porch," Miss Imogene interrupted, with a swift upward glance. "Come, child, put on a fresh log and let your old cousin have five minutes with you. The evening is not half over."

There was a new tone in the pretty voice that surprised Dorothea. She had thought of Miss Imogene as a sweet and gentle spinster who spent most of her life in social gayety or in doing some pleasant task out of the hurry and bustle of the world. Now she felt that under the sweet manner there was a will that might prove stubborn if the cause arose. Moreover there was nothing to do but comply with the request unless she chose to be deliberately rude. That she could not be, even though she could find no excuse ready to her tongue.

Dorothea placed a fresh log on the fire and then stood beside her visitor, the two looking down in silence as the wood caught and flamed up in a cheerful blaze. Then, quite suddenly, so that Dorothea

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was surprised, Miss Imogene turned and glanced about the room.

Dorothea's heart sank. She saw no possibility of the shrunken figure on the floor escaping Miss Imogene's sharp eyes. Nor was she mistaken.

"It's quite a pretty room by fire-light," said the little lady and took a step toward the bed. A moment later she was beside the prostrate man, looking down at him.

"What's this, child?" she asked in a whisper.

Dorothea hurried to her side.

"Oh, Cousin Imogene, it is a Union officer escaped from Andersonville," Dorothea whispered. "They are hunting for him now. They think he's here, and —"

"Why didn't you tell one of the men, Hal or Val Tracy?" demanded the elder woman with a trace of severity in her tone.

"Because I wouldn't give him up," Dorothea maintained stoutly. "I'm not a real Rebel. I'm British; and though I do believe the South is right I don't think they should hunt men with dogs. And, Cousin Imogene, I mean to do all I can to help him."

"Do you know who he is?" was the next question. Dorothea's plea did not seem to have made any impression on the little lady, who suddenly had grown rather imperious and whose gentleness had dropped from her like a cloak.

"No, of course not," Dorothea answered, surprised. "But he's a Federal officer and he's been on the porch roof all night without anything to eat and —"

"Light a candle and bring it here," her cousin commanded, dropping to her knees as Dorothea obeyed.

With a deft hand Miss Imogene turned the face

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of the shrunken figure to the light. As she looked at it she gave a smothered cry.

"It's Larry Stanchfield!" she exclaimed and at the name the man opened his eyes and looked up at the two leaning over him.

For an instant there was silence, and then Miss Imogene spoke in a strained voice.

"I'll help you, Dorothea," she said. "Go lock the door."

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CHAPTER XIV

MISS IMOGENE TAKES CHARGE

WHEN Dorothea hurried back after locking the door she found that Miss Imogene was holding up the young man's head and had managed to force some of the wine down his throat. A minute later a little color came into his cheek and he smiled up at them in a weak, embarrassed way.

"I'm sorry," he murmured; "I'm an utter idiot to do this — but how did you know I was Larry Stanchfield?"

"I knew your father when he was about your age," Miss Imogene replied gently. "For the moment I was silly enough to take you for him. But we haven't time to talk of that."

Young Stanchfield struggled to sit up.

"This is really unpardonable," he stammered. "I should not be here at all. I'll go at once."

"You'll go as far as the fire," Miss Imogene pointed out in a tone that admitted of no argument. "For the present you are safe here."

"But I never intended to stay in this room," he protested, "and it isn't of my own safety I'm thinking."

"It is what I am thinking of," Miss Imogene replied. "Although we must get rid of you, or we shall be suspected of not being the staunch Rebels we are. Come over by the fire now and warm yourself."

Miss Imogene spoke lightly, but there was a

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serious undertone in her voice and the young man, looking first at her and then at Dorothea, nodded his head as if he understood more than her words implied.

"You are very good," he murmured.

But he had noted the band of red velvet about Miss Imogene's throat and Dorothea had caught the expression of comprehension that had passed over his face.

"He thinks Cousin Imogene's a Red String, too," she thought, and then, "How do I know that she isn't?"

With an effort Stanchfield rose and staggered toward the fireplace; but when Miss Ivory would have steadied him with a hand on his arm he winced.

"Not that arm," he muttered; "it's — it's scratched a bit."

"I'm sorry," Miss Imogene said; "I shall have a look at it presently, but first of all we must get you some strengthening food." They seated him in front of the fire, and he leaned back with a sigh of relief; but he seemed so weak that Miss Imogene looked at him anxiously.

"There is a flask in my room and glass of milk," Miss Imogene spoke half to herself.

"Oh, pray don't trouble," Stanchfield faltered; and then, before their eyes, he fainted straight away.

In the silence that followed they could hear the low-toned murmur of men's voices and, suddenly, the sound of a closing door far down the hall. Miss Imogene and Dorothea looked at each other apprehensively, for a moment.

"Lock it, after me, child," Miss Imogene whispered, starting toward the door with an air of determination, "and don't let any one in till I come back. I'll only be a minute."

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She left the room swiftly, after a glance up and down the hall, and Dorothea turned the key and waited.

A little later there came a knock and, expecting Miss Imogene's return, she opened noiselessly. Before her stood Val Tracy.

"Oh, you're in here," he said, with some embarrassment; "I didn't know. You see we're looking for that escaped man. We haven't found him yet and we're searching the house. Of course, as you're here, we can take for granted a Union officer isn't in this room."

His eyes wandered over the girl's head for a moment and then, with a bow, he drew back into the semi-darkness of the hall. Dorothea, without a word closed the door, her breath coming in short, quick gasps. It was so narrow an escape that she had all the sensations of having been caught. A few minutes later Miss Imogene came back with milk and brandy.

Dorothea in a few quick words told of Tracy's visit and Miss Imogene shook her head doubtfully at the girl's assurance that he had seen nothing.

"I hope not," she replied, "but we can't speculate about that. We must bring this boy around as quickly as we can."

She forced some of the brandy between Stanchfield's lips and presently he came to himself. A stiff punch and the sandwiches seemed to restore his strength like magic, and Miss Imogene turned her attention to his injured arm.

"Oh, please don't bother with it," Stanchfield insisted. "I can fix it myself now. That's what I was trying to do when I fainted like the silly idiot that I am. An old darky dressed it for me the second day I was out of Andersonville. It's nothing

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but a flesh wound, and it was doing pretty well, considering, till I climbed up the vines to the porch roof to get away from the hounds. Then it opened again, and I'm afraid it's rather a mess. But please don't bother."

"Dorothea, hold the candle over here," Miss Imogene said calmly, utterly ignoring this plea. "I'll slit the sleeve. We'll have to get you other clothes from somewhere, anyhow. Did that hurt?"

Her delicate fingers that seemed not to be made for such things, deftly separated the stained shirt from the clotted blood, and Dorothea, unused to such sights, felt herself growing sick and faint at this wound which the young man had called a scratch. But she summoned her courage and, although she was rather white about the lips, managed to give Miss Imogene all the help that lady needed, so that very shortly the washing and bandaging was over.

"I feel like a new man," Stanchfield declared in a little while. "Now I must go. I can't be here at daybreak."

He started to his feet, but was still so weak that in spite of his determination he fell back into his chair.

"The truth is," Miss Imogene remarked with a wrinkled brow, "you must have rest to recuperate. But what to do with you, my boy, I don't know."

"In a little I shall be myself again," Stanchfield insisted. "At the worst I can get back on the roof and wait till my strength returns. Whatever happens I cannot involve you ladies in my troubles."

"My dear boy," Miss Imogene spoke softly, "I knew your father so well that anything I might do for you would but repay in a slight measure much that I owe him. There must be some way found to start you out again with a chance of escape."

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She spoke so earnestly that it would have seemed rudeness to protest further. Stanchfield bowed his head as if in assent to her assumption of the responsibility.

"Is your father still alive?" Miss Imogene asked after a moment's silence.

"He was, the last time I heard of him," Stanchfield answered. "He is a Major in our army now, you know."

"I didn't know," Miss Imogene said, looking down into the fire with a return of her old manner. "I didn't know. I haven't heard of him for many years, but some day I might meet him. Could I face him, knowing that I might have helped his son and did not try? No, no. For the sake of a dear friendship I am doubly bound." She paused and then, lifting her head with a determined air, spoke directly to Dorothea.

"May I share your room to-night, honey?"

"Of course," answered Dorothea readily.

"Then Lieutenant Stanchfield shall have one good night's rest at least," Miss Imogene spoke determinedly; but she was interrupted.

"My dear lady," Stanchfield broke in, seeing the drift of her words. "It is impossible. You have no idea what the conditions are in Andersonville. I am not fit to inhabit a decent place."

"I will see to that," Miss Imogene replied with a smile. "There's a huge brass pitcher filled with water in the fireplace and a tub under the bed. Hot water and China-berry soap is what I prescribe. You will have strength enough to manage that. After, you will sleep the better and in the meantime I'll find some other clothes for you somewhere."

"I must stick to the rags of my uniform," Stanch-

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field said. "So long as I wear that, I am at least not in danger of my life as a spy."

"Then tie it in a towel and place it outside your door," Miss Imogene instructed him. "I'll have my maid clean it. I think I can trust her. At least I can scare her, for I have done it before."

"You are the most thoughtful person in the world," Stanchfield murmured gratefully. "I'd rather have clean clothes than food, even!"

"You shall have both," Miss Imogene promised. "And you need not fear interruption. Even my maid is instructed not to enter my room without leave. I am sure you will be safe there. There is a large screen in the room and a huge wardrobe. If worst comes to worst you can hide."

As she finished speaking they all became aware of the murmur of voices on the lawn below. Quick as a flash Miss Imogene blew out the candle and hurried to the window. A moment later there came a low-toned exchange of farewells and the soft thuds of horses moving away.

"They are gone without their prisoner," Miss Imogene whispered as she came back to the fire. "All is safe now. The music down stairs will drown the noise of anything we do up here. But we have no more time to waste, for we shall both be missed if we do not return to the dance. Dorothea, go into my room and light the candle. We will wait till you come back to tell us if all is clear."

Dorothea went off and found time to pull out the tub from under the bed and place it before the fire. She feared that Mr. Stanchfield might not be able to do that for himself. Also she found two eggs, one of which she brought back with her.

"Ah," exclaimed the little lady, as she saw the egg in Dorothea's hand. "That is my morning

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dose and the very thing you will need this evening, Mr. Stanchfield."

She mixed the egg with a little milk and brandy and made the young man swallow it, after which he declared himself ready for anything. But even yet he was very, very weak and both Miss Imogene and Dorothea hovered about him as he tottered along the hall. However he reached his goal safely and within the doorway he turned and, seizing a hand of each of his rescuers, pressed them to his lips.

"It will be like Heaven here," he said brokenly, then he closed the door softly behind him.

"Poor lad," whispered Miss Imogene. Then gently, "To think I should meet his son here."

So far there had not been the slightest hitch in their plans. The music below was loud and they thought that no one had seen them, but as they turned to take their way below they heard the door of Val Tracy's room softly close.

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CHAPTER XV

UNCERTAINTY

INSTEAD of going down stairs directly, both Miss Imogene and Dorothea turned into the latter's room and looked at each other in consternation.

"Do you suppose Lieutenant Tracy saw us?" Dorothea asked, under her breath.

"I'm afraid he did, honey," Miss Imogene said, shaking her head disconsolately so that her curls quivered delicately. "Poor Larry! He'll have to go back to that place of torture, and he won't last long from the looks of him."

"But we must do something," Dorothea insisted vehemently. "There must be something we can do. We must think. Why didn't Mr. Tracy take him at once instead of going back to his own room? Perhaps he's giving us a chance to get the poor fellow away."

Miss Imogene shook her head.

"No, he wouldn't do that, my dear," she answered. "But he knows that a man who can't cross the hall without the help of two females to keep him from falling, isn't going to run far."

"Then let us warn Mr. Stanchfield and he can go out on the roof again and hide," Dorothea suggested. "It's been searched, you know."

"They would find him," Miss Imogene said. "No, there is only one thing we can do. I'm going

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to appeal to Val himself to parole the lad in my care until he is stronger. I'll promise to turn him over some time. That's our best chance now."

She did not wait to consider the matter further but ran into the hall and knocked at Tracy's door. Dorothea, watching, saw her stand a moment listening, then knock again and, receiving no response, open the door and look into the room. Then she hurried back.

"He's not there, honey," she whispered. "In that second we were talking he must have gone to lay an information."

"Perhaps Lieutenant Tracy wasn't there at all," Dorothea whispered, hopefully. "It might have been a breath of air that closed the door, mightn't it?"

"That's possible," Miss Imogene agreed, and paused a moment in deep thought. "At any rate, honey, we must act as if no one knew what we had been doing. I shall make it my business to find out if Val does know. Come, we must go down now. I've no doubt we've been missed already, so I shall say we've been having a little talk together. Don't lose your courage, dear. After all we're not sure Val saw us. Come!"

She led the way down stairs, her smile as gay and unconcerned as ever, and Dorothea tried her best to imitate her care-free manner. At the foot of the stairs they met April, who stopped short in her tracks.

"I was wondering where you were," April announced, looking squarely at Dorothea.

"Oh, Dorothea has been taking pity upon her old cousin," Miss Imogene cut in. "We have been warming ourselves by the fire in her room. Old ladies do not have as many partners as they are used to and sometimes they like to slip away and forget

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that they are no longer belles. Dorothea has tried to make me forget."

"It is the first time I ever heard that you lacked partners, Cousin Imogene," April replied, not at all convinced by this explanation, but at that moment a young officer came up to claim a dance and there was no further opportunity to discuss the matter.

"Be careful of April," Miss Imogene whispered in Dorothea's ear. "Her eyes are very sharp. Remember she would stop at nothing to aid the Confederacy."

Before Dorothea could more than nod, each had been claimed by partners and they were separated for the time being. Dorothea danced with Hal, who informed her that he was convinced that there never had been an escaped prisoner about the place and that it was foolish to put such absolute reliance in the hounds as some people were disposed to do. Under other circumstances this might have been cheering news to the girl, but she had no faith in her own theory of a draught and believed that Tracy was aware of what had been going on and, although she felt that the fact of Hal's not being informed as yet might give some little encouragement, she was certain that sooner or later the whole household would know of the effort she had made to aid Larry Stanchfield to escape from Andersonville.

An hour or so later she was sitting between dances talking to a young man whom she had met that evening, when, looking across the room, she saw Val Tracy walk over and take a seat beside Miss Imogene. For some time Dorothea lost all idea of what her polite attendant was saying and he, doing his best to entertain this attractive young lady, grew more and more convinced that girls from England were cold and unresponsive, if not stupid.

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Miss Imogene, with a bright untroubled smile, looked up at Val as he joined her.

"Are you coming to take pity upon a poor wall flower?" she asked in her gentlest and most appealing manner.

"I am most lucky to find you alone," he answered gallantly. "It is unheard of for so lovely a lady not to be surrounded by a bevy of partners."

"Sit down and stop blarneying," she ordered, patting a chair beside her. "I have been wondering where you were, and after all your vows of constancy how can I be expected to enjoy myself when you desert me?" She laughed lightly. These two always amused themselves, and others, with their extravagant expressions of devotion. "Where have you been?" she added.

"Searching after mysteries," he answered, with a bantering air. "I begin to think there are Red Strings about." He laughed as he spoke and looked away across the room to where Dorothea sat, while Miss Imogene said to herself that he *did* know what was afoot.

"Do you believe in that silly tale?" she questioned. "I, for one, think it is just one of those stories that people make up for excitement's sake. You might think I was a Red String because I wear a red velvet band about my neck."

"Perhaps I do," he answered promptly, turning to her with a quick glance.

Miss Imogene threw back her head and gave a gay laugh.

"You are so funny, Val," she chuckled. "Why not suspect April because she had a red belt on the other day? Or little Miss Dorothea across the way there, or the fiddler with his red necktie? If it is cause for suspicion to wear red, ah, then every

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brunette in the South will be suspected. And, my dear boy, they won't give up their most becoming color because of this tale of Red Strings."

"Faith 'tis the red in their cheeks that makes fools of us men," Tracy answered half seriously, his eyes again wandering across the room. "But what's the good of thinking of fair maids these days? There's a Yankee bullet waiting for me now, for all I know. Molded and ready and —"

"Tut, tut, such a way for a brave soldier to talk," Miss Imogene interrupted. "Would you have me crying before all these people?"

"There will be few tears for me when I catch that bullet," Tracy replied; but he laughed, and the momentary seriousness, so unusual with him, disappeared. "Faith, Miss Imogene, there's a deal of nonsense in all this talk of brave soldiers. I was quaking in my shoes not ten minutes ago, fearing I might cross an enemy and him ready to fight for it."

"Where have you been to look for enemies?" Miss Imogene demanded with a fine show of surprise.

"Did you not know?" he asked, with lifted brow. "There's been a great hue and cry after an escaped prisoner. The same fellow they were hunting for last night. It seems they haven't caught him and were persuaded he was still here. As if he'd ever been here at all! And I losing half a dozen dances by their silliness."

"He *didn't* see!" Miss Imogene thought, with a great sense of relief, and then aloud, "Is that where all the men have been?"

"It is," he answered. "We've been through the house. They left it to me to search your room. I haven't done it — yet."

He hesitated just an instant on the last word and

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again her anxiety came back to Miss Imogene. "He does know after all and is warning me," she told herself but still could not be certain. When he had first come over to her she had been determined to tell him all, and beg that Larry Stanchfield might remain under her care till he had recovered. Now she racked her brains to know what course was wisest, and then, suddenly, her mind was made up.

"Seriously, Val," she began, "suppose a fair female suddenly came upon a poor fellow in the midst of his enemies and, when she saw him, she found that it was a matter of the affections with her. That instead of a stranger there was the image of her lover. What would you have her do, Val?" She ended with her voice dropped almost to a whisper and looking him full in the face.

Tracy did not reply at once but sat gazing across the room with unseeing eyes. Then suddenly he jumped to his feet.

"Ah, faith! the best thing to do in a case of that kind, Miss Imogene, is to tell a soft-hearted Irishman." He laughed and bowed to her. "I think I can get the next dance with Miss Drummond. Sure, I'll try. It may be the last chance I'll ever have."

His departure left her puzzled, and she watched him cross the floor to where Dorothea was sitting. Presently the girl's partner departed, glad to escape so stupid a female, whose only conversation was a vague "yes," or "no," which did not come always in the right place.

"If the child but keeps up her courage," Miss Imogene thought, as she watched the scene.

Dorothea, meanwhile, was smiling up at Tracy, though she felt all anxiety. She would have given all she had to know the conversation that had taken place between the young officer and Miss Imogene.

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But she could not even guess at it, so resolved to be on her guard and talk as if what had occurred in the interval since last she saw him, had never happened. This he made easy by referring to their previous conversation.

"I come with good news for you, Miss Drummond," he began. "They haven't found the escaped prisoner after all."

"I confess I'm glad," Dorothea said frankly. "Of course that's not the thing to say here in the South, but I just can't help being pleased to think any one has gotten away from Andersonville. Hal said it was silly to look for him about here."

"It seems to have been," Tracy answered, and the music striking up, he asked her for the dance.

They whirled away together, not speaking for some moments, and then Val broke in upon her anxious thoughts with a question.

"Suppose, Miss Drummond," he said, "that a chap found himself growing fond of a certain girl and discovered suddenly that his rival was on the scene, though he nor any one else had had any notion of it. What should he do about it?"

For a moment Dorothea was puzzled. She thought, when he began to speak, that he was making a reference to Stanchfield, but this talk of a rival and a love affair made that impossible. Evidently Tracy was in love with April and had discovered that Hendon was near. He suspected, as she did, that April knew this, and was asking her what he should do.

"How can I answer that, Mr. Tracy?" she replied. "Perhaps there isn't a rival after all. Perhaps it's only gossip. At any rate that chap you just spoke of needn't give up —"

"Don't you think he need?" he interrupted eag-

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erly. "He might do a good deal if he thought there was a chance for him."

"He might do anything that was honorable," she answered.

"And, faith, how can we measure honor?" Val cut in with a touch of bitterness in his voice. "That chap, you know, might have two honors to satisfy. One for the girl he loved and one for the country he served."

Again Dorothea wondered if it was Stanchfield he had in mind, but dismissed this thought at once. There could be no question of rivalry, as far as the young man upstairs was concerned. He knew no one in the house except Miss Imogene and herself.

Before she had decided how to answer the dance ended and supper was announced.

"What can I get for you?" Tracy asked, as she seated herself in the hall.

"Nothing, thank you," she answered.

"Oh, but you must have something," he insisted.

Dorothea shook her head.

"I feel as if refreshments would choke me when I think of the poor prisoners at Andersonville," she replied. "I haven't any appetite for such luxuries."

Tracy shrugged his broad shoulders and then sat down beside her.

"Don't you think you exaggerate a bit, Miss Drummond?" he began. "These luxuries, as you call them, are not so rich as they sound. The cake is made of bolted corn meal and sorghum. The sherbet is sweetened with honey, the coffee is made from thin slices of potato browned in the oven and ground up. That doesn't sound very expensive, does it? And yet that is the best we can do in the way of luxuries. Indeed some of our parties are 'starvation parties,' with no refreshments at all."

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"But every one is so gay and seems so happy and regardless of all this misery going on near them." Dorothea was not quite herself, and Tracy looked at her questioningly before he answered.

"It is strange to you, I suppose," he went on. "But you must remember that the Southern ladies pretend that they are as well off as ever. No matter what comes they mean to meet it with smiling faces. That needs courage; and remember, too, they are fighting for their freedom."

"But what of freedom for the slaves?" Dorothea demanded sharply.

"Hush," Tracy replied gravely. "For your own sake you must guard your words. An Abolitionist could not be tolerated here. And remember your aunt must be considered, for you are staying in her house and she is responsible for what you do and say."

"You're right," Dorothea answered; "and it isn't that I don't think the South is justified in fighting. I've always thought that. That is what every one believes in England, but since I have been here there are so many things I can't understand. You won't tell on me, will you?" she ended with a smile at him.

"I'm not a dyed in the wool Rebel myself," he answered with the same lightness of manner. "I'm an adopted son of the South."

"How did you come to be in it at all?" Dorothea questioned. She liked this young Irishman, and in his company was forgetting for the moment that there were matters that should be causing her plenty of anxiety.

"Oh, I'm in it because I'm Irish, I suppose, and love a good fight," he answered. "I was living in Charleston when the war broke out, and there one heard but this side of the quarrel. I've seen a thing

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or two since, but I'm not denying that I would do the same again. And I'll do my duty, you may be sure of that."

His last words were uttered with a note of seriousness and Dorothea remembered with a pang that perhaps already he had prepared to send Stanchfield back to Andersonville.

"I hope you will always make sure where your duty lies," she said half to herself, but he caught the words and nodded his head.

"I have made up my mind as to that," he answered, and the next dance beginning, they were separated.

A half hour later Dorothea and Miss Imogene were back in the girl's room for the night.

"What did Val Tracy say to you, child?" Miss Imogene demanded in an undertone, when they were at last alone.

"Nothing whatever to do with Mr. Stanchfield," Dorothea answered.

"Are you sure?" Miss Imogene asked anxiously.

"Quite sure, Cousin Imogene," Dorothea answered. "Did he say anything to you? Does he know?"

"I can't tell, and that's the truth," Miss Imogene replied slowly. "We can only wait. Sometimes I think he knows and then I — I don't know what I think; but I shall be up at daylight to see what has happened."

Dorothea blew out the candle a little later and crept into bed beside Miss Imogene.

"I wish it was one of the others who was going to betray us," she whispered.

"Why do you wish that?" demanded Miss Imogene.

"Because I like him," Dorothea confessed frankly.

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"But of course he's in love with April. He told me as much."

"That is what I've always thought," Miss Imogene agreed, and then there was silence. But only one of them really slept soundly that night.

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CHAPTER XVI

AN UNEXPECTED DISAPPEARANCE

DOROTHEA had not expected to sleep a wink but she suddenly found herself awake with the sun streaming in at the window. She had a feeling that it was still early, but in a little she heard sounds coming from the direction of the cook-house and there was a faint smell of fried bacon in the air, so that she knew it was not any too early to start Larry Stanchfield on his way, and she turned over to speak to Miss Imogene, a little fearful lest they had overslept.

To her surprise Miss Imogene's place was empty and the girl looked about the room a little bewildered, and still somewhat sleepy. Then she jumped out of bed and put on a dressing-wrapper to be ready for anything that might happen.

She had not long to wait. In a few minutes Miss Imogene came noiselessly into the room with a face of anxious perplexity.

"What is it?" whispered Dorothea.

"I don't know, child," was the answer. "He's gone."

"Mr. Stanchfield?"

"Yes."

"Then it's all right," murmured Dorothea.

"I wish I knew, but I'm afraid not," Miss Imogene went on. "I couldn't sleep in that soft nightgown of yours after Macon Mills muslin, so, when you were sound asleep, I slipped out. I

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wanted to see if there was any chance of his getting off before the others woke; but, my dear, there was Val Tracy's whole troop camped around the house! I could see their camp fires. That made me despair, for I wanted to get that bundle of clothes out of the way at least. But the boy didn't put them outside his door. This was in the night, you understand, so I came back and waited. Well, my dear, just before dawn I dozed off, but I was awake again as the sun came up, and there wasn't a trooper about! They'd all gone and I determined to warn young Larry and send him off to take his chances — but he isn't there. The bed has been used and he had had his bath, but — but what has happened I fear to think. I'm afraid Val has taken him, after all."

"I shall never want to speak to Mr. Tracy again if he has," Dorothea protested.

"Oh, you mustn't say that, honey," the elder woman returned. "He must do his duty, you know. After all they are enemies, those two, and —"

She broke off a little tearfully and wiped her eyes.

"Could he have gotten out by the window?" Dorothea suggested.

"Oh, I don't know — perhaps," Miss Imogene replied. "I was so surprised to find him gone that I didn't think of anything else. He may have escaped after all. I'm going back now to see if there is any clew to what happened."

"I'm coming with you," said Dorothea, and the two tiptoed down the hallway to Miss Imogene's room.

"He has burned something in the fireplace," Dorothea whispered, as she looked down at the ashes in the grate.

"Clothing!" exclaimed Miss Imogene after an inspection. "I wonder what he has worn away?"

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"Are you sure?" Dorothea asked, surprised, stooping down beside her.

Miss Imogene picked up a piece of charred cloth. There could be no doubt about that.

"It's very curious," murmured Dorothea, and went over to the window, which she found fastened on the inside. "And he hasn't gone out here, either."

"He's been taken by Val Tracy," Miss Imogene declared positively, all hope gone.

This Dorothea could not well deny. It certainly looked as if no other explanation of the young man's disappearance would fit the facts. The girl looked about the room hopelessly, and her eye fell upon the desk in the corner. Miss Imogene followed her glance and then with a little cry ran to it.

"I left this open," she said hurriedly, letting down the lid as she spoke.

It was long since the compartments had been filled with creamy sheets, gone, too, were all the luxurious fittings. A dish of sand, a goose quill pen or two, poke-berry ink, some home-made wafers and wall-paper envelopes. For paper there was only a book of household receipts which had been written upon one side only. That was the extent of the stationery. But on one of these sheets was a note, propped up against the inkstand. Miss Imogene tore it open, half frantically.

"Dear and gracious lady," it began. "It is neither lack of gratitude nor fear for my own skin that takes me off without a word of thanks and farewell. Your kindness and that of the young lady at whose window I knocked so unceremoniously, I shall never forget. But my presence here cannot fail to be an embarrassment to you and a danger as well. In happier days, perhaps, I shall see you both again,

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and if I should ever be able to repay you for what you have done for a spent and rather helpless wanderer, believe me, I shall not fail. What fortune is ahead of me I cannot guess. I, at least, have hope. Always faithffully yours, Laurence Stanchfield."

"Now what do you make of that?" Miss Imogene questioned. "Has he escaped or hasn't he?"

"I should think he was going to try it," Dorothea replied.

"But he couldn't, with all those troopers about the house!" Miss Imogene exclaimed. "And yet he talks as if he expected to be all right."

"Perhaps he didn't know they were there till afterwards," Dorothea suggested.

"That's it!" Miss Imogene agreed; "and yet I don't think he would have tried to go without looking out of the window at least, and he could have seen their camp-fires on every side. And then he would have had a chance to add a postscript or — or —"

She stopped in perplexity, looking at the girl before her as if asking a word of encouragement, but she shook her head.

"All we can do is to wait and see what Val Tracy says."

"If I know Val, he won't say anything," Miss Imogene declared.

"But some one will know," Dorothea insisted. "They couldn't capture a man who was trying to escape without any one hearing of it. I should have thought we would have heard the noise."

"That's true, too," Miss Imogene admitted. "I am usually like a cat, yet I didn't catch a sound, not even of the troopers riding away. I did fall asleep for a few minutes. However, I know a struggle would have waked me."

"All we can do is to wait," Dorothea repeated.

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"And not say a word," Miss Imogene added, and so it was agreed. Dorothea went back to her room and, taking Miss Imogene's advice to sleep longer if she could, slipped back into bed again.

When she opened her eyes once more Harriot was sitting on the edge of the bed, cross-legged, gazing down at her unwinkingly.

"I didn't say a word," she protested the moment Dorothea's eyes were opened. "I promised mother I wouldn't wake you and I didn't. I just looked at you — and it was funny to see you squirm."

Dorothea stretched and yawned luxuriously.

"Is it very late?" she asked a little conscience-stricken.

"Oh, no," Harriot assured her. "Hardly anybody is up but me, except of course, Val Tracy. He's always out at daybreak with his troop. But he's in a fine temper this morning. Somebody stole his best horse right out of our stable."

Dorothea sat up in bed, suddenly very wide awake. She knew of one who had need of a horse and she wondered if any one else would share her suspicions.

"Who do you suppose borrowed it?" she asked innocently.

"I don't know," Harriot answered promptly. "Val insists that it must be one of the negroes in the neighborhood who is taking his freedom and wants to get away. I don't think that's it, but of course you can't tell. It might be Lee Hendon, for all we know. They say he's out-laying, and he may want to get over into Tennessee. But of course I wouldn't tell Val that. When he stops treating me like a child, I'll help him to find his old horse, but not before."

Dorothea found in this much food for thought. For one thing she felt certain that Val Tracy's

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natural suspicion would fall upon the man who was thought to have escaped from Andersonville and to be in the neighborhood of the May house, if not actually in it. If he had not seen them the night before with young Stanchfield, this would be his natural conclusion. And, if he had seen them, there was only one interpretation to put upon his inaction. Val, himself, had helped the man to escape, furnishing him with a good horse for that purpose. This brought the question, "Why should he have done such a thing?" To Dorothea's thinking there was only one explanation. Val Tracy was the mysterious Red String. That would make clear much that had puzzled her. She had previously taken for granted that this unknown person was a woman because Stanchfield had evidently thought so. Now she wondered where Tracy wore his tell-tale badge and determined to look for it at the first opportunity. She would have liked to have a talk with Miss Imogene, but Lucy opened the door with her breakfast tray and put an end to her reflections.

After breakfast she and Harriot went down stairs together, and as they descended the sounds of impatient horses and of men stamping about the gallery jingling their spurs and accouterments drew them to the front door. Lieutenant Tracy and his troop were back again, but evidently preparing to leave at once, and the sight of them put another alarming thought into Dorothea's mind. Suppose, after all, she was mistaken and that instead of Tracy's helping Stanchfield he was then and there preparing to hunt him down? This suggestion brought a sharp catch at her heart.

Tracy himself seemed in anything but a good humor and greeted the two with a gruff "good morning."

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"Where are you off to?" Harriot inquired innocently.

"Hunting!" he answered shortly, then turning to Dorothea, "Won't you wish me luck?"

"That depends upon what you are to hunt," she answered quickly.

"There is only one quarry in war-times," he answered shortly, and snapping his sword to his belt he ran down the steps and mounted his horse.

Dorothea's eyes followed him and it came into her mind that after all he was going upon a dangerous errand and might not come back.

"I wish you a safe return," she called up to him.

He glanced down at her quickly, and a bright smile came over his face.

"Faith, that's a better wish than the other," he cried, gayly. "It will take a fine lot of Yankees to keep me away if you're wanting me to come back!" And with a smile he rode off at the head of his troop.

The girls looked after them and Dorothea felt a little glow of warmth in her heart at Val's words. Perhaps, after all, he did value her good wishes for his safe return and, yes, she admitted to herself that she did not want anything to happen to him. And there had been a good deal of earnestness in his tone, as if indeed he had meant what he said.

"He's a great blarneyer is Val Tracy," Harriot remarked calmly. "He seems to think that every girls wants him to be in love with her. Such silliness!"

Dorothea did not reply to this observation. She looked after the troop till it was out of sight, then turned back into the house.

"What's come over you all of a sudden?" Harriot demanded. "You look as if you'd lost your best friend."

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"Nonsense!" Dorothea declared, but her cousin was not convinced.

It was not until well on in the afternoon that Dorothea saw Miss Imogene alone and then there was a little satisfaction to be gotten out of talking things over. The elder lady could offer no solution to the problems that perplexed them both. Whether Val Tracy had helped Stanchfield to escape or whether, on the other hand, he was at that moment trying to effect his capture they neither of them could determine. There was plenty of evidence to confirm either conclusion.

"All we can do is to wait till Val comes back," Miss Imogene remarked disconsolately.

"But even then we may not be able to tell, unless he says something about it," Dorothea replied.

"That is true too, honey," Miss Imogene conceded. "But there is nothing else for it. I only pray the boy has escaped. It was a bold move to take Val's horse, but it was only boldness that offered a chance of escape."

"But we thought Val had helped him," Dorothea suggested, and Miss Imogene, nodding her head in agreement, replied,

"We only hoped, honey, but it was most improbable. At all events we don't know anything, we'll just have to wait."

The day passed slowly enough. Harriot attached herself to Dorothea but complained that her cousin wasn't like herself.

"I bring you cake and you just nibble it as if you were at a party being polite," she protested. "Then I beg Aunt Decent to make some goober pralines and you don't even look at them. You're getting just like April."

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Dorothea forced a laugh.

"That's a compliment," she said with as much gayety of manner as she could muster.

"Oh, is it?" Harriot drawled scornfully. "Well, I didn't mean it that way. If growing up means just falling in love, then —"

"What are you talking about?" Dorothea interrupted sharply.

"You," Harriot answered blandly, munching one of the scorned pralines energetically. "I've been puzzling my head, trying to think who it could be. Of course there's Val Tracy, but 'most everybody thinks he's in love with April, and 'most everybody is, so I don't be —"

"Stop talking nonsense!" Dorothea broke in again. "I'm not in love with anybody."

"Hum!" murmured Harriot doubtfully. "I don't know anything else that would take your appetite away, and you needn't deny it's gone."

"It seems to me I've been eating ever since you woke me up this morning," Dorothea protested.

"I didn't wake you up," Harriot insisted, thus changing the subject much to Dorothea's delight.

But as the hours wore on she became more and more anxious for Val's return and when in the early evening she heard a horseman ride rapidly up to the front of the house she was the first on the porch to welcome him. It was not Tracy, however, but Hal, and he brought information that was by no means welcome.

"We're ordered off!" he announced.

He had little more to tell than that. Tracy was already on the move and they need not expect to see him for a long time to come. The Confederate Government was combing the country for men and

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big events were expected. Hal gave his meager news and was off again ere they realized it, and the household settled down to await events.

"That's the way it goes," Mrs. May sighed as they sat at the table that night and looked about at the empty places. "In the morning the house is full. In the evening we are deserted. We women haven't the easiest part in some ways."

"That is the misfortune of being born a girl," April said bitterly.

"We have our place, too, honey," Miss Imogene replied with a gentle rebuke in her tone. "I think our men need us just as we are. Fighting isn't just letting off guns."

"But I might take the place of a man who won't fight!" April burst out and, jumping to her feet, she left the room amid a hush that lasted some little time after she had gone. All knew of whom she was thinking, and the rest of the meal was eaten in comparative silence.

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CHAPTER XVII

CONFIDENCES

IT was many months before Dorothea saw Val Tracy again and in the quiet days that followed the departure of all the men in the May household, she and Miss Imogene often speculated over what had happened to young Larry Stanchfield. There was no answer to their problem, but this common secret brought a close intimacy between the two.

It was not to be wondered at that the girl should find her heart drawn to this gentle, white-haired little lady; and the elder woman, perhaps because of her past memories, took a special interest in the child of her old friend.

Miss Imogene, looking back upon the days of her girlhood, regarded the life about her with the kindly eyes of that romantic time. Indeed the love affairs of the young people she knew seemed to interest her more than the momentous events that were happening in the world.

Stirring tales of Forrest's raids, or of victory nearer home, such as the brilliant Confederate General Johnston's defeat of Palmer, which roused April to wild enthusiasm, drew from her only an anxious inquiry about one or other of the young officers whose love secrets had been poured into her sympathetic ear.

"I wouldn't like anything to happen to Bennie Hardee till he had made it up with Myrtle Clay,"

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she would murmur anxiously; or, knitting her brows, "Every General ought to talk seriously to his young officers about writing home the minute a battle is over. Emmie Polk hasn't heard from Will Cary and she is half crazy with anxiety."

"If Cousin Immie had her way all love stories would have a happy ending," April had said and turned away, half bitterly.

Miss Imogene watched her go, then addressing Dorothea with a sigh, "It is so easy to miss the best things in life," she told her. "When we are young how little we know where our real happiness lies. And, oh, how foolish are those who will not listen to what their hearts tell them."

Dorothea knew well enough that Miss Imogene was thinking of April. The elder lady did not conceal the fact that she had little patience with her beautiful cousin's attitude toward Lee Hendon, though she was wise enough not to force her opinions upon the girl herself.

"When one has missed the greatest happiness because of a coquettish whim — ah, then, my dear, a lifetime of regret is hard to bear," she went on. "I know what I am talking about, Dorothea, my child. You remember Larry Stanchfield?"

"Yes, indeed," Dorothea answered. "I've never ceased to wonder what has happened to him."

"And perhaps you noticed, honey, that when I discovered who he was I was quite ready to set him safely on his way?" Miss Imogene asked with a gentle smile.

"You said it was because of an old friendship," Dorothea replied, wondering what was coming.

"It was more than a friendship," Miss Imogene admitted, looking off into the distance as if she pictured again the well-remembered scene from out of

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the past. "To think that he might have been my son, if — if I had not been so foolish a maid. I would not listen to my heart. Shall I tell you about it, dear?"

"Please do," Dorothea murmured.

"It may serve as a warning to you, child," Miss Imogene continued in her sweet gentle voice. "That boy's father and I — well, he was madly in love with me and I with him. His name was Laurence, too; 'Larry,' I called him, and he came from up North, from Albany in New York State. I met him while he was visiting in Charleston, and, my dear, I say it without vanity, I was something of a toast in those days. Yes, I had many lovers and all would bend to my slightest whims. All but Larry — who was a man. He would not bend, and so — so I sent him off, but I never forgot him nor did any other come to take his place in my heart. Perhaps it was because he would not bend. It isn't the man you can twist around your finger, honey, that you remember the longest."

"What did you want of him that he wouldn't do?" Dorothea asked after a pause.

"Nothing very much, it seemed to me at the time," Miss Imogene replied, "but now I know that I asked him to sacrifice a principle, and that he would not do, even for me whom he loved. I know he did love me then — you remember that I said he was from the North."

"But there wasn't any war then," Dorothea interrupted.

"No, there wasn't; but Larry was an Abolitionist even in those days," Miss Imogene explained. "To tease him I said that I should give my husband one of my negro boys for a body-servant. I thought what a fine joke it would be to make him a slave

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owner, little knowing that my whole happiness was at stake. And, honey, he refused my gift! So we parted — and to-day his son is fighting for the very Cause over which we quarreled twenty years ago. And I — I have lost over twenty years of happiness. All the slaves in the world were not worth it, and I knew it at the time; but I had a foolish pride and thought that no one should refuse me what I wanted. I have missed the best in life for a silly whim and when I see others about me who are running the same risk, I long to take them in my arms and whisper my story in their ears. I do not mean you, dear," Miss Imogene ended, with a little laugh.

Dorothea knew to whom Miss Imogene referred, but she kept that knowledge to herself. Thereafter, however, she understood better why April's affairs were of such vital interest to her cousin.

But love affairs were not the only matters these two discussed. As the weeks passed Dorothea grew to know more intimately the causes of the war between the North and the South and many perplexing questions entered her mind. Her sympathy for the Confederacy she had taken for granted; but, with an increasing knowledge of the actual conditions, she began to think for herself and, being an English girl, she was free from the prejudices that would have hampered the cool judgment of one born in America.

She was very glad to find that she could talk freely with Miss Imogene, who, although none doubted her loyalty, showed, to Dorothea at least, some understanding of the Union point of view.

"You know, honey," Miss Imogene began upon one occasion, "I was at home in Charleston when this war broke out. It was my own State that began it, and perhaps if it hadn't been for the lesson Larry Stanchfield had taught me I should have been as bitter

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as the other females who clamored for States' rights and longed to see the old flag torn down at Fort Sumter. As it was, I had already determined to set all my negroes free; but I couldn't do it all at once, either for their sakes or for my own. No, my dear, I had first to have them taught trades so that they could take care of themselves, and then I had to let them go secretly, one at a time."

"But why, Cousin Imogene?" Dorothea asked, puzzled at this. "They belonged to you, didn't they? You could do as you pleased with them, couldn't you?"

"Yes, honey, but the feeling against freeing slaves was very marked," Miss Imogene explained. "Particularly when the war began."

"But the war wasn't because of slavery," Dorothea objected. "It was because of secession. That is what we all thought in England."

"That is what we all said it was," Miss Imogene agreed, "but the address that South Carolina sent to the other states invited them to form a 'Confederacy of Slave-holding States.' They are the very words, my dear — and then it went on to say that the North did not like slavery and would stop it sooner or later. It did not give one good reason for secession. I know, because I read it. I reckon I'm the only Southern woman who did!" She laughed a little as she ended.

"Would it have made any difference if they had read it?" Dorothea asked.

"Not a mite, honey," Miss Imogene answered cheerfully. "We were all past reasoning, then. Every one was just swept along on one grand wave of excitement. There was martial music, and new uniforms; shouting, singing, sobbing — just anything to keep the war-fever up to its highest pitch. No-

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body wanted to think. They just wanted to feel. It was all as contagious as the measles. And they believed in Toombs next to the Bible."

"It isn't quite easy to understand," Dorothea said thoughtfully. "You'd think going to war was a serious matter."

"And so it is, honey," Miss Imogene replied, "and that's the reason why nobody did any thinking in those days. The politicians wanted the war, General Toombs and such men didn't want anybody to do anything but shout for secession. And there were sad things and funny things a-plenty, too. I saw the old flag go down on Fort Sumter. That did not seem sad to me then, though when I learned later that the fort had been evacuated and not surrendered, I confess I felt a throb of pride."

"What were the funny things?" asked Dorothea.

"Well, there were the newspapers," Miss Imogene went on. "All the dispatches from the North were printed under the heading 'Foreign News.' Just silly pretenses like that, which the politicians encouraged. But I'm silly, too, to be going over an old story."

"But you were always for the South, Cousin Imogene," Dorothea remarked half-questioningly.

"To be sure, honey," came the ready answer. "I was no different from the others. And what else could I do? My home was here. I had no kin outside the South, and besides I was not accustomed to traveling without a gentleman escort. I'm not a strong-minded female, you know." She laughed a little. "After all I'm just like the others you have met here, except that I learned a lesson when I wasn't very old which has set me thinking. I don't like war at all and shall be very glad when this one is over, as I hope it soon will be. But I

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don't say that to any one but you. Particularly not to April."

The life in the May household, of which Dorothea had become a permanent part, went on busily week after week. There were alternating periods of depression and elation as rumors of good or bad fortune for the Confederate armies reached the little town. But no matter whether they won or lost, the confidence of her Southern cousins never flagged. The social gayeties continued unabated, although the lack of young men emphasized the cause of their absence.

"I suppose you'd have us act like the Yanks had scared us till we forgot how to dance," Harriot told Dorothea, echoing the opinion generally held by those about her.

And so the songs and merriment went on, and if there was a hollow ring in the laughter Dorothea was not able to detect it. The sherbets might be sweetened with watermelon sugar, the cake made of sorghum and rice flour, dresses might be re-dyed and refurbished till they were thread-bare; but the dances and parties never flagged.

Letters from her father had come several times to Dorothea, some by way of Mexico, others in a roundabout way from Canada, but he had warned her that it was becoming increasingly difficult to communicate with her, that few of her letters sent through his agents in England ever reached him. He suggested that in case of necessity a personal item in the *Richmond Enquirer* which coöperated with the *New York Daily News* would be forwarded to him. Meanwhile both must rest assured that no news was good news.

Mrs. Stewart remained in little Washington al-

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though she still talked of instant flight, and one day late in May she was visiting her sister-in-law and discussing the matter as if it were an entirely new subject.

"What I maintain," she insisted, "is that there is no future for us here any longer. Even if we win the war, our good old Wilkes County families have been humiliated to the depths. I have seen my own child eat clabber from a cracked plate." She looked about her, doubtless expecting groans from sympathetic relatives.

"Did it have cinnamon and sugar on it?" demanded Harriot. "Aunt Decent gives most of ours to the babies, but I just love it."

They were interrupted at that moment by the sound of a horse trotting up the drive and Harriot ran out to see who it was.

"Oh, mother, here's Hal!" she called, and a moment later the young man himself walked in.

He was lean and worn-looking and his mother gazed at him anxiously as she took him in her arms.

"You have bad news, I fear," she murmured. "Is it your father?"

"You have heard from him since I have," he answered quickly. "No, mother, there's no personal misfortune to tell. All our kin have come through safely. Val Tracy has been made a Captain and is as well as you can expect. But I fear he's hungry, or in love. He hasn't been cheerful a minute since we left here." He was striving to speak lightly, but his mother saw through the pretense.

"There is something troubling you, dear," she insisted. "I can tell by your face that something is wrong."

Hal shrugged his shoulders and half turned away.

"The fact is," he said, after a slight pause, "the

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Yanks are getting a little too near to suit me. We hoped to hold them at Chattanooga, but you know what happened there!"

"I am going home to pack *now!*" Mrs. Stewart exclaimed, rising majestically to her feet. "Come, Corinne. We should have started for Mexico long ago."

"You'd better hear Hal's news before you go," Mrs. May suggested.

"Yes, Aunt Cora," Hal went on with the ghost of a smile. "You'll have to decide on Brazil. Sherman has the jump on you."

"You mean we're cut off?" cried Mrs. Stewart in anguish.

"Oh, not entirely," Hal answered, laughing at her exaggerated despair. "You can at least get out of Washington; but, if you're going, I shouldn't advise delay. Sherman isn't one to lose time, and when he tears up a railroad he does it completely. He builds a great fire with the ties and heats the rails till they're red-hot and twists them around trees. 'Jeff Davis' neckties,' he calls them."

"A very poor joke indeed!" Mrs. Stewart remarked with dignity. "I do not know what kind of neckties our good President Davis wears, but I am sure they are not twisted around trees."

There was a laugh at this sally, at which Mrs. Stewart looked still more dignified and important, but Hal spoke directly to his mother.

"Seriously," he went on, "I have really come to warn you that it is best you should leave Washington."

"That's quite impossible, Hal," his mother answered quietly.

"Don't say that yet," he went on earnestly. "Of course there's nothing positive in war and it may be

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that we shall give the Yanks a good beating after all; but to tell you the truth I don't expect it. At any rate Sherman is in Georgia, and he doesn't stand still!"

"I shall not go, in any circumstances," Mrs. May replied firmly. "I do not believe the war has changed the Union officers into monsters. If we stay here we shall be respected even if the Yankees do come. I feel sure an empty house is much more likely to be a prey to stragglers."

"Perhaps your mother is right, Hal," Mrs. Stewart put in anxiously, her uncertainty again getting the better of her. "I have heard that there were a few really nice people in the North in spite of everything. I never quite believed it until I met a Mrs. Biddle from Philadelphia at the White Sulphur who was really quite a cultivated female. Though to be sure her mother was from Baltimore, which may account for it."

"I am certain it is best to stay," Miss Ivory cut in upon Mrs. Stewart with scant ceremony. "A party of ladies will be perfectly safe, no matter who gets the upper hand. But, Parthenia, my dear, if you have a wish to take the children and the servants to the Magnolia plantation I'll stay here till you return. I can get along with Sally and Aunt Decent and one or two of the younger girls. We could manage nicely."

"No, Imogene," said Mrs. May, "it's sweet of you to suggest it, but I have many reasons for staying. One of the best is that here I am half way between Hal and his father and can go to either one of them in case of need or have them brought home. So here I'll stay. As to the girls, I think they're perfectly safe. As a matter of fact, Hal," she went on, turning directly to her son, "I cannot see what

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would take the Northern army in this direction. We have no iron mines or large manufactories. There are no supply depots to tempt an invader to Washington."

"Now that is indeed a thought, 'Thenia," her sister-in-law interjected. "You have almost persuaded me to stay with you. But I always have in mind what the conditions are likely to be after the war. Of course you may expect that the North will find some pretext for getting even for Andersonville. They will probably put thousands of our bravest boys in prison, *literally thousands*. As to our valuables," she lifted her brows with a superior expression, "I know what to do with them."

"You had best send them over here if you are determined to go away," Mrs. May suggested.

"Indeed no, my dear," was the answer, "I shall put them in a safer place still. Judge Andrews will care for them."

"But he's a Yankee — or as good as one!" Harriot exclaimed.

"Exactly," her aunt went on. "He is a man with convictions, and I always have an admiration for a person who will stand up for his opinions. When all of you scorned him, I had ever a pleasant word for him. Of course I could not openly associate with him, in the circumstances, but I am sure he knows my sympathy. Now you see what I gain by looking ahead a little, and having a kind word to say to one in adversity. I shall have a safe place for my valuables, don't you think?"

Miss Ivory emitted a lady-like little snort of contempt and Cora turned to her.

"Oh, I know how intolerant you are, Imogene!" she said, with a touch of anger in her voice. "But I can't afford to be selfish. I have a daughter to

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provide for. For her sake I must curb my pride and take help where I can find it."

Saying which she again rose and, giving every one the impression that she had been deeply injured, quitted the house, followed by Corinne, who took her cue from her mother.

"I am glad that a wise providence put it out of my power to marry a woman like that," Miss Imogene said softly. "I do not quite understand how Charles Stewart has permitted her to live this long."

"Don't bother about her," Hal interjected. "She'll do as she pleases anyway, and no amount of advice will move her. And you can remember, too, that she isn't the only one in the South who has been 'looking ahead,' as she calls it. There are thousands who are trying to prepare a place in the other camp, in case worst comes to worst."

"Yes," April, who up to that moment had scarcely said a word, now cried bitterly. "There are too many carrying water on both shoulders, and that is why people are beginning to talk about our losing. I did not expect it of you, Hal," she ended, with a straight look at her brother.

"I can only see what the plain facts are, sis," he answered. "Sherman has a hundred thousand men and we have less than fifty thousand. What are we going to do against such odds?"

"Do!" cried April in a ringing voice. "We're going to fight till they're beaten. There's nothing else we can do!" At the words the young girl seemed transfigured. "A victory! A victory!" she cried, and running to the piano she started singing "Dixie."

But for once she failed to carry her audience with her. "What is the matter with you-all?" she demanded, standing up pale but defiant beside the

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piano. "Are we to be beaten by talk? If we all grow glum when everything is not going right how can we expect to win? We wouldn't deserve to win. The Yankees have twice as many men as we have, you say. Well, we have Johnston! He'll stop Sherman if he only had quarter what he has. We shall win in spite of all the croaking and croakers!"

She was half beside herself for the moment, almost hysterical, and realizing it, or perhaps fearing that she would break down and cry, she quitted the room in haste.

Harriot began to sob from excitement and sympathy for the sister she adored, and Dorothea put an arm about her comfortingly.

Harriot looked at her cousin through her tears.

"I don't think you care at all," she murmured, and Dorothea was surprised to find that there was some truth in the words. At least she did not find herself sorrowing over the waning fortunes of the South.

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CHAPTER XVIII

A DISTRESSING INCIDENT

HAL MAY remained at home only two days, but in that time his old uniform was patched and Aunt Decent plied him with food until he pleaded lack of room for more, so that when he went away he had perceptibly improved in appearance.

Again the May household settled down to the humdrum business of waiting for news of the armies. And Sherman's march through Georgia gave the people of little Washington many anxious moments, though it soon became apparent that their town would escape and that after Atlanta, Savannah was the chief objective of the Federal expedition.

Of Val Tracy there was scarcely a word. He seemed to have dropped out of sight, but not out of the minds of his friends. Dorothea, remembering the last time she had seen him mount his horse and ride away, wondered often what was happening to him. She and Miss Imogene talked much of the young Irishman and speculated also upon the fortune of young Stanchfield whose whereabouts were still unknown to them.

Dorothea had grown to be one of the family and her aunt treated her as if she were another daughter. Harriot was her devoted slave, and at first April had shown a fondness for her English cousin, which she had been quick to return. But there was none

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of the close intimacy between the two that Dorothea would have welcomed.

And the cause of this was not far to seek. Even Dorothea realized that a certain change had come in her feelings toward the rights and wrongs of the war. It was impossible for her to respond to April's enthusiastic support of everything the Confederacy represented. Nor could she condemn the North in all things with the fervor April expected of those who claimed sympathy with the South. Always there was the remembrance of her visit to Mr. Lincoln. When she heard the Union execrated with unmeasured bitterness she pictured in her mind the tall, gentle man in Washington into whose eyes she had looked. There she had read the truth, and knew that he had none of the sordid qualities that were attributed to him by his unreasoning enemies. Dorothea did not believe that he could be wrong in his efforts to solve the great problems confronting him, for she knew that his heart held a great sympathy for the South.

Thus as the summer passed she began to realize that a change was taking place in her thoughts about the conflict. And at about the same time she felt that her relations with April had grown strained. She only became aware of it gradually when she noted that her beautiful cousin was apt to leave the room where she was. There were no longer any of the little demonstrations of affection that had marked their earlier intimacy. Constantly she caught April's eyes upon her as if she was watched with suspicion. There was no act or word that Dorothea could lay hold of, yet all the time she realized a widening of the breach between them.

One rainy morning in the Autumn, Dorothea had gone out on the porch to look for some sign of

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clearing weather, when her attention was attracted by two drenched figures coming slowly up the drive toward the house. They were colored servants, one an old woman and the other quite a lad, and they were in a truly pitiable state. They were soaked through and their clothing clung to them, dripping water as they walked.

At sight of Dorothea they hastened their steps and, arriving at the porch, begged to be permitted to see "Ol' Miss."

Dorothea brought them in out of the wet and went in search of her aunt, whom she found in the weaving-room. Together they returned to the porch, and at sight of the forlorn couple Mrs. May gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, Aunt Dilsey, is it you?" she cried. "What brings you here on a day like this?"

For answer the old woman threw herself on her knees at Mrs. May's feet, her brown face working convulsively.

"Sam and me — we's done run away!" she sobbed.

"Run away?" echoed Mrs. May as if she could scarcely believe her ears. "Nonsense, Aunt Dilsey! You can't run away. You're one of the family."

"Yes'm, I is," the old woman moaned, "but we-all's jes' 'bliged to run away, and we knows the patrollers will be out after us. That's why we-all done come hehe. I's been mighty proud all my days. I's always said, 'Dilsey can tote heh own skillet,' but please, Ol' Miss, Dilsey can't tote no skillet no mo'."

The woman rocked herself with grief and Mrs. May looked down upon her pityingly.

"Get up, Dilsey," she said after a moment. "I

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don't know what you're talking about. If you can't explain, let Sam do it."

The old colored woman continued to mumble unintelligibly till at last Mrs. May silenced her.

"Now, Sam," she said, turning to the boy, "what is the trouble?"

Somewhat sullenly Sam found his tongue.

"Ouah Ol' Miss, she's aimin' to sell me down the river to Savannah," he began, "and Granny, heah, she don't like it nohow, and I don't like it nohow neither, so I's aimin' to run away up North an' be free."

"I don't believe a word of it," Mrs. May replied incredulously. "You two go into the kitchen and visit Aunt Decent and dry yourselves. I'll send you back home. Mrs. Stewart doesn't sell her servants. It's absurd."

"Ouah Ol' Miss done sold Casper and Manders to a man from Macon no later'n yestehday, Miss 'Thenia," Sam insisted doggedly. "They're done gone a'ready. If I's done got to go away from Granny I's goin' No'th whehe I'll be free — less'n the houn's catch me first."

Dorothea had watched her aunt's face grow graver and graver as she heard these words.

"I cannot believe what you are saying, Sam," she replied, though her tone was not so positive now. "How could it have happened? Have the boys been stealing or disobedient?"

"No'm," the lad answered readily. "This man from Macon, he wanted carpenters, and he was ready to pay for 'em in gold, Miss 'Thenia. So ouah Ol' Miss she done sol' 'em, that's all."

"An' now she's aimin' to sell Sam, too, the onlies' one of my Dilly's pickaninnies what I done raise to comfort me. Please, Miss 'Thenia, buy us bofe.

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We'll work for you till we drops. Honest we will, and we'll —"

The old woman's voice trailed off into uncontrollable sobs.

"There is certainly some mistake," Mrs. May said, turning to Dorothea. "Would you mind, dear, fetching April for me."

Dorothea ran off and soon returned with her cousin, to whom the situation was explained at once.

"There is some misunderstanding, of course," Mrs. May ended, "but it is not a matter that can be delayed. It must be settled at once."

"You'd better let me go, mother," April suggested. "I can't believe Aunt Cora could possibly do what Aunt Dilsey thinks, and it's very wet for you."

"No, I will leave Sam and Aunt Dilsey for you to look after," Mrs. May replied significantly, and it was plain to April that she did not wish their story to be repeated throughout the quarters by the two. "I'll take Dorothea with me and go over to Cora's. Send one of the boys to tell Jastrow."

April with Aunt Dilsey and Sam in tow disappeared. The carriage was ready almost as soon as Mrs. May and Dorothea, and once on their way the girl ventured to ask something about Aunt Dilsey and her grandson.

"She was Mother May's cook when I was first married," Mrs. May explained. "Your Aunt Cora, who was married some years later, always lived with her mother till the old lady died, so it was natural that she should inherit all the old house servants. Aunt Dilsey's children are all dead too, and Sam is her only kin; so you see why she dreads to be separated from him. It is quite unheard of with us to separate families by selling them, and I am quite sure

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that there is some mistake. I am only going over now to make certain."

Dorothea hoped that this might be the case. This question of slave-owning had puzzled wiser heads than hers, but so far she had seen the best side of the matter. The May servants were fortunate, in that their owners had their interests wholly at heart, indeed Dorothea frequently observed that the child-like negroes took advantage of this indulgence. On the other hand she had heard talk of hard masters who worked their slaves without consideration; those with whom she had been associated condemned this quite frankly, though as a body they felt that they must uphold the practice of slave-owning no matter what its abuses might be. Indeed they were quite sincere in their belief that their people were unfit to take care of themselves and dreaded the future for them in case the Federal Cause should triumph.

Now, however, the seriousness of the question was coming very near to Dorothea. Right in the family was the possibility of a cruel separation. Whatever Mrs. Stewart might have done, and whether she had sold her servants or not, it was quite clear to Dorothea's keen mind that she had the power to do so, and that in itself did not seem right. Mrs. Stewart might be just as thoughtful of those who were dependent upon her as was Aunt Parthenia, but she was sure there must be many throughout the South who would have no such consideration for the unfortunates over whom the law gave them absolute control.

As they swept into the drive at Crosslands, Uncle Jastrow turned in his seat and addressed his mistress.

"I on'y hopes, Ol' Miss," he said, referring to the mud that had accumulated on the running gear of the carriage, "that none of the fambly is gwine

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to see we-all comin' into the place lookin' like this."

Mrs. May laughed.

"No one will blame you for the state of the roads, Uncle Jastrow," she said.

But this did not placate the old man.

"These hosses and this cahhiage don't look like they eveh seen a currycomb nor yet a shammy," he grunted, and drove up to the house with the air of a martyr at the stake.

Mrs. May and Dorothea were ushered into the parlor, where they found Corinne and her mother busy counting gold pieces. On hearing the door open Mrs. Stewart hastily swept some of the stacks of coin into her bag, whereat Corinne was moved to protest.

"Now I'll have to count them all over again, and it's only Aunt 'Thenia and Dorothea."

Both greeted their visitors with great warmth, Corinne inquiring for Harriot, (left at home with a visiting governess, much to that young lady's disgust,) and her mother rejoicing at the timelessness of the visit.

"For really, my dear 'Thenia, I need your advice," she began at once though she was never known to follow any advice, no matter from what source. "I have just learned how heavy gold is."

"I didn't know there was so much gold left in the Confederacy," Mrs. May returned, striving to speak lightly. The sight of the yellow coins seemed to confirm all that the colored boy, Sam, had said.

Mrs. Stewart wagged her head sagely.

"It is not easy to make people produce it," she remarked, "but if you have something they want very much and won't sell for anything else — well, you see?" She pointed proudly to the table.

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"And have you been selling your diamonds?" Mrs. May asked. She did not wish her sister-in-law to know that she had heard a tale she was loath to believe.

"Oh, no," was the ready answer. "I've just disposed of two of the boys, Casper and Manders." She spoke so indifferently that Dorothea looked at her in amazement. She had always thought her a silly woman, but she could not believe her so utterly heartless.

"I thought Charles had encouraged Manders to marry," Mrs. May remarked calmly, concealing her disapproval. "But I suppose you sold his wife with him?"

Mrs. Stewart pushed back her chair fretfully.

"My dear Parthenia, these are not times when one may consult one's feelings," she replied irritably. "I must do the best I can. The man who bought Manders would not have his wife, and so there was nothing possible but to separate them. Charles has sent me word to realize on anything I can and not to take payment in Confederate money. If I can't get coin I am to take State notes. And I was feeling mighty proud of my bargain till you came along."

"But now that I am here," Mrs. May urged, "I hope I can persuade you to give this gentleman back his money and tell him you have decided not to separate families. You know it has never been the custom in our family."

"No — nor have civil wars been the custom — nor have any of the family had to face going to live in a strange country!" Mrs. Stewart burst out wrathfully. "Here it wouldn't so much matter if we were poor, because every one else will be poor too, and they all know we're Mays. But how do I know the

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Mexicans ever heard of Wilkes County? I am simply obliged to have money enough to keep up appearances. And besides, what's the odds what I do with these negroes of ours? The war will set them free sooner or later. It's a sort of a Yankee trick, but I think I'm rather clever to find any one to buy them. I didn't believe I could, till I heard of this man from Macon."

The cleverness of the bargain was not all that was interesting Mrs. May.

"Suppose, as you say, the war ends and the slaves are freed," she said genially; "don't you realize that families once separated may never meet again?"

"When they're free they'll have to learn to look out for themselves. And if I wanted to, I couldn't get the boys back now," Mrs. Stewart replied ungraciously. "This man who bought them wasn't a gentleman, you understand. He bought them because they were good mechanics. Moreover, I don't know where he has sent them. It may be he is going to sell their labor."

"Cora!" Mrs. May cried, "I am certain Charles never meant you to dispose of your people."

"Don't let's argue it, Parthenia," Mrs. Stewart retorted, summoning all her dignity to bolster an uneasy conscience. "I must be the judge of what my husband desires, and whatever I may feel personally I put aside when I remember my daughter. I was given full power to do as I thought best and I have used it."

Mrs. May rose to leave.

"I came here," she said, with studied restraint, "because of what I believed to be a mistake. Now I am afraid to ask you another question — but can it be that you propose to separate Aunt Dilsey and Sam?"

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Mrs. Stewart had the grace to look somewhat embarrassed.

"I am hoping to sell Aunt Dilsey with Sam," she answered. "You know she's getting on in years — but for all that she's a wonderful cook, and I told the man from Macon —"

A spot of red appeared in each of Mrs. May's cheeks.

"That is all I wished to know," she interrupted abruptly. "Aunt Dilsey and Sam are at my house, and there they shall stay. Henry, at least, would never forgive me the shame of it if that faithful old soul was sold to strangers in her advanced age. We can ill-afford to take more mouths to feed, not to speak of paying for them; but let me know the price you propose to ask and I will see that the money reaches you."

Mrs. Stewart beamed upon her sister-in-law.

"Now that's just like you, 'Thenia!" she exclaimed delightedly. "It relieves my mind of all anxiety. Charles will never worry about Aunt Dilsey if she is to be kept in the family. And you needn't bother about the money till it's convenient. In fact I've rather more gold in the house now than I know what to do with. Good-by, my dear. I'm so glad you came. I confess I was a little uneasy about Aunt Dilsey and Sam, but now my mind is quite at ease. Good-by, Dorothea, honey."

Back in the carriage again and outside the place Mrs. May tried to make excuses for her sister-in-law, but her own indignation could hardly be hidden.

"I did not believe it possible that one of our family could do such a thing," she burst out finally.

"But don't you think, Aunt Parthenia," Dorothea said, "it would be much better if no one had the power to buy and sell human beings?"

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Her aunt looked at her a moment intently, then she nodded her head a little sadly.

"Perhaps so, Dorothea," she answered half to herself. "Perhaps so." And they drove back the rest of the way in silence.

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CHAPTER XIX

A STRANGE ENCOUNTER

THIS incident of old Aunt Dilsey and Sam was but one of many that set Dorothea to thinking deeply. The summer had passed with but little change in the village of Washington. September had seen Sherman in possession of Atlanta; he had occupied Savannah in December and a month later began his successful march through South Carolina. But the most significant occurrence of that Autumn was the reëlection of Mr. Lincoln. This was a confirmation of the unity felt in the North to prosecute the war to the end and a blasting of the hopes of those Southerners who, realizing their dwindling resources, had worked to bring about some form of compromise. The winter of 1865 was a continued history of defeat for the Confederate armies who opposed Sherman. Charleston was evacuated in February, and when the Stars and Stripes once more floated over Sumter's ruins, it seemed to Dorothea that the end of the war had really come. For she developed an intense interest in all these matters and it was hard for her to understand how her cousins could close their eyes to the clear meaning of events.

Miss Imogene was away upon a visit to other relatives and there was no one to whom the girl could talk freely, so that her thoughts were in a somewhat chaotic state. She was surprised sometimes to find herself so eager for news of the war, as if in some way her personal fortunes were involved. Now

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and then she would say to herself that these things made little difference to an English girl; but immediately there came the recollection that she was half American.

A rainy spring followed a cold and dismal winter, and although early in April the weather cleared for a time, it brought no cheer to the South. General Lee was near Richmond with his army, and about him were the Union forces under Grant. The Confederacy was making its last stand, though there were very few in the South who would acknowledge the condition.

In the May household there was little to indicate that a crisis existed in the cause for which they all worked. So far the cruelties of war had passed them by, but one bright morning Hal was brought home by his colored body-servant, Big Jim, quite out of his senses from a bad saber wound in the head and a crippled leg. Mrs. May, with admirable fortitude, welcomed him, glad to have her son back to nurse and thanking Heaven it was no worse.

Big Jim's story of the incident reflected a good deal of credit upon himself and he seemed immensely proud of his successful meeting of the emergency, and was never tired of talking about it.

"I drug the Lil' Marse out o' the battle and the doctor he done fix him up on the road," Jim explained. "Den the Colonel, hisself, was brung by wounded an' the doctor, he had to go off wif him so he tol' me to carry Lil' Marse to the horspital. But I seen ouah sogers when they comes out of them places wifout they's laigs, or they's arms, or they's eyes, an' I says, 'Big Jim, Ol' Miss gwine for you somethin' turrible, if you on'y brings back chunks of Lil' Marse, so I done brung him (all o' him, mind), right here and didn't go near no horspital, where like

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as not they'd done ampitate his haid like they do arms and laigs. Now you-all fix him up jes' to suit yourselves."

That was Big Jim's story, and from then on the entire household revolved about the sick-room and even the news of battles became of secondary importance.

In the afternoon Harriot, being free of her governess, proposed to carry the news to Corinne; for Mrs. Stewart, in spite of her many threats of immediate departure, was still in Washington.

"We may get some poundcake, you know," Harriot suggested as an added inducement, but there was a lack of conviction in her tone.

"I'll go if we take the short cut," Dorothea answered, meaning a path through a strip of woods on the outskirts of the town, which was a most beautiful and densely shaded place running for miles through hill and swamp. It was a favorite resort of Dorothea's, and she loved to wander along the narrow path, through the heavy undergrowth, and fancy herself far away from civilization.

Harriot consented to this cheerfully enough, although she had meant to drive to her aunt's, and the two set off.

Corinne was not visible when they arrived, but Mrs. Stewart welcomed them with her usual cordiality.

"Make yourselves perfectly at home, my dears," she said in greeting. "You will excuse me, I know; but I have so many things to do. We are leaving 'most any day now."

She rambled on in this strain, coming and going in a great bustle of excitement through the room in which they sat, as if her departure really were imminent. She talked just as Dorothea had heard her

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talk by the hour, and so familiar was the theme that Dorothea soon lost the thread of it, her thoughts wandered off to other matters and she sat idly looking out of the window, which commanded a view of the driveway up to the house.

"I really don't know where Corinne is," Mrs. Stewart explained in one of her darts into the room. "I think she went into the village for something, but I can't be sure. However, she will be home shortly, I suppose, if she doesn't stay longer wherever she has gone."

Dorothea smiled to herself as she heard the words, thinking that undoubtedly Mrs. Stewart was entirely correct in this statement; but not caring very much whether she saw Corinne or not.

"And, Harriot," Mrs. Stewart went on, "you might go and see if there are not some refreshments to be had. Perhaps there is some fruit cake, but —"

Her voice trailed off as she and the quickly responsive Harriot left the room.

Alone, Dorothea looked out of the window, idly watching two people coming slowly toward the house. As they drew nearer she recognized that one of the pair was Corinne and beside her was a man, walking painfully with the aid of a crutch. She had no need to note that his tattered uniform was the Confederate gray, for the sight of wounded soldiers struggling back along the roads to their homes was familiar enough. They passed through the little town daily, singly or in groups of half a dozen, helping each other as best they might and depending upon the generosity of the inhabitants for their food from day to day. Of course every one was kind to them and they were one of the few sources of information coming into the place.

Dorothea's heart was touched once more, as it

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had been at every encounter with these unfortunate victims of the war, and she had the impulse to go out to greet the man with a word of encouragement and sympathy. But she knew Corinne well enough to realize that she would not welcome any assistance in her ministrations. She had no wish to share the glory of her good deeds with any one, and, knowing this, Dorothea kept her seat and watched the two approach.

Evidently the man was badly disabled. Each limping step seemed a painful effort, and now and then he would stop as if it was impossible to bear the pain without a rest. As they drew near enough for Dorothea to see their faces, her view was cut off by the shrubbery and it was not until she heard Corinne's voice that she knew they had reached the house. The stumbling of the wounded man mounting the two or three steps of the porch and then the stumping of his crutch on the board flooring, were next audible.

"Sit down here and I will bring you some food," Corinne said, and there was the scrape of a chair as the girl pulled it forward.

The window at which Dorothea sat looked out upon the side porch, but as she heard Corinne come into the house and hurry through it toward the rear, she rose and crossed the room to get a view of the wounded man.

He was sitting with his back to her, a forlorn, shabby figure, that seemed shrunken with pain and suffering. Again she had the impulse to go out to him and at least say a word of what was in her heart; but she restrained herself, knowing that Corinne would be displeased to find her there till after she had ministered to the man herself.

But, as Dorothea watched, she saw that the strang-

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er's head suddenly turned sharply right and left as if he looked about him. In a moment he straightened up and then, to her amazement, jumped noiselessly to his feet and, without a trace of lameness, tiptoed to the edge of the porch, evidently looking around to see how the land lay.

Instantly the girl realized that this was no ordinary wounded soldier — that, as a matter of fact, the man was not wounded at all — and that all the suffering he seemed to show was a sham. And she grew indignant. He was, in all probability, a deserter, pretending that he was wounded in order to escape the risks his fellows were forced to run, and at the same time trading upon the sympathies of those who might better have saved their charities for more worthy objects.

"He doesn't deserve food that might be given to really suffering soldiers," she thought, and was about to run out to the kitchen to tell Corinne what she had seen.

But before she had taken a step the man turned and faced her through the window. With a catch of her breath she recognized him at once. It was Larry Stanchfield! He was unkempt and none too clean. A two days' growth of beard would have disguised his features from his friends; but he had been like that when Dorothea had last seen him and there was no doubt in her mind as to who he was. She stopped abruptly and Stanchfield, seeing her through the window and recognizing her, lifted his hand and beckoned her to come out to him.

When Dorothea reached the porch, he was back in his chair, once more the crippled Confederate soldier.

"What are you doing here?" she asked in a whisper.

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"I am about to be fed against my will," he answered, with a grin. "The young lady insisted that I must be taken care of. She met me on the road and would have it that I come here and be stuffed, although I told her I needed nothing."

"Then why did you come?" demanded Dorothea.

"Because if I had been too insistent she would have been suspicious," he answered. "I venture to think that there are not many Rebel soldiers, wounded as badly as I am, who would protest at being taken care of by a charming young lady. And I don't want to be shot, you know. I've more important matters to attend to."

His voice was low but there was a reckless boyishness about it that contrasted strangely with his appearance.

"But why are you in this part of the country at all?" Dorothea demanded again. She was worried about him, for, having helped to save him once, she thought it a useless risk that he should run his head into the lion's mouth again.

"I am on my way South to warn our troops," he replied soberly. "And I haven't much time either. The Johnny Rebs are preparing a secret expedition against the forces Sherman left at Savannah. It's a very pretty plan, and, unless I get through, it will make trouble for us. I know the country and volunteered to carry the word. I wanted to see you and the charming little lady who helped me before, but I did not believe I should be lucky enough to meet you, as I couldn't risk stopping at the house. I would be miles on my road now, if it hadn't been for this zealous young lady. I shall have to run half the night to make up for it."

He laughed quietly and looked down at his crutch.

"We did not know whether you had gotten away

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safely or not," Dorothea replied. "We didn't hear a word about it."

"Didn't that Irishman tell you?" Stanchfield asked, in surprise.

"Irishman!" echoed Dorothea, and it was a moment or two before she realized that Stanchfield was talking of Val Tracy. "Did he help you?" she demanded, after a slight pause.

"To be sure he did," came the ready answer, "and I took for granted he had told you all about it."

"We have never heard a word of you since that night," Dorothea informed him. She was so astounded that her thoughts were in a whirl. "Val had helped him after all — but why had he not told them?" Her mind was a chaos. She could reason nothing out.

"Hum, that's funny," Larry went on, half to himself. "I supposed of course he had let you know. He was a fine chap, though I must say he didn't seem awfully cordial about what he did; but he gave me a good horse and set me on my way, and I didn't think it polite to criticize his manners."

"But aren't you running a great risk, now?" Dorothea asked anxiously.

"Not very," he replied lightly, "and then, if I get into trouble, I trust I may still count upon you to help me out."

"I don't think you can count upon me again," Dorothea answered seriously. "I was willing to save you from prison but I don't think I could help you defeat the South."

"Why, aren't you for the North?" Stanchfield murmured incredulously.

"I'm British," the girl returned, "but that hasn't anything to do with it. It wouldn't be fair for me

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to accept the hospitality of my aunt and cousins and betray their Cause. Do you think it would?"

"But you're a Red String," he replied, as if that made everything all right.

"Oh, but I'm not," said Dorothea positively.

The young man's glance fell to the red velvet ribbon on the girl's wrist and then sought her face. He was perplexed and a little startled.

"Then who is the Red String? The other lady?" he asked.

"Oh, no," Dorothea replied quickly. "Miss Imogene couldn't be, you know. We were just sorry for the prisoners at Andersonville. That was why we helped you." At that moment she was convinced that Val Tracy was the elusive member of that mysterious band of Northern sympathizers, but this thought she kept to herself.

"Then I suppose you will betray me now?" he questioned. "I shouldn't have told you of my mission!"

"I'm neutral, or at least I ought to be," Dorothea replied, perplexed. "Anyway, I shan't betray you. Only you mustn't expect me to help you, either."

Their conversation was interrupted by the return of Corinne, accompanied by Mrs. Stewart and Harriot. As Dorothea had expected, Corinne was by no means pleased by this audience to share with her the glory of attending "one of our wounded heroes," as she expressed it, and Dorothea watched the proceedings, half fearful and half amused. Stanchfield became again the suffering soldier and Dorothea dared not catch his eye for fear she might laugh outright. It was no easy matter to keep a straight face listening to the excessive expressions of sympathy that Mrs. Stewart and her daughter thought appropriate to the occasion.

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The farce kept up till Stanchfield could eat no more and, with many protestations of thanks, hobbled off, glad, Dorothea knew, to be on the road with his message that must be delivered.

On their way home Harriot complained that Dorothea was very silent.

"You behave as if you were starving," Harriot told her, as they strolled through Coulter Woods.

Dorothea laughed and tried to take an interest in Harriot's chatter, but her mind was filled with perplexing thoughts which she was trying vainly to straighten out. The news that Stanchfield had brought, added to her mystification. Was Val Tracy the Red String who had eluded her so persistently? Indeed she could find no other explanation for his share in the young man's first escape. Yet it did not seem possible. Tracy was not the sort of a fellow to sail under false colors of any sort. She knew that he was not so bitter a foe to the Union as the Southerners generally were. She realized that he felt much as she did about the causes of the war; but it would not be like him, once having committed himself, to play the traitor, which must be the case if indeed he was one of the Red Strings. And yet, what other explanation was there for what he had done?

Of Stanchfield and his journey to Savannah she thought also. This time, however, she did not seem to have the same personal interest that had played on her sympathies before. He was well and strong and evidently in the way of being overfed, if his experience at Mrs. Stewart's was any measure of his future treatment. Of course, he ran considerable risk; but he seemed very sure of himself, and his confidence inspired her with faith that he would pull through and accomplish his mission.

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The matter that most perplexed her had to do with herself. She had told him she was British and therefore neutral in this controversy between the North and the South. But was she? She was fast coming to the conclusion that she was neither neutral nor British in her feelings. She began to find the American part of her taking a vital interest in the things that went on about her. She was no longer a visitor to America. She did not wish to be that. Her mother had been an American — one of these kindly Southern women whose charm made them a welcome wherever they went. In her heart Dorothea felt the stirrings of her American blood and a nearer kinship to these aunts and cousins with whom she had been living.

"You know, Harriot," she said, after a long silence, "I don't think the English people know very much about our country after all."

The girl beside her looked up with wide-eyed surprise.

"What has that to do with peanut pralines?" she demanded. "Here I've been talking about really interesting things and the first word you've said for hours is something that doesn't make any difference one way or the other. I think you *must* be in love."

Dorothea laughed outright and brought her thoughts back to her immediate surroundings.

"I was just thinking aloud," she remarked lightly.

"That's the way I always act when I'm hungry," Harriot replied practically. "When we get home I'll get you a glass of milk or some clabber. Aunt Decent says that's the best thing there is for an empty stomach."

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CHAPTER XX

A DEBT TO BE PAID

TWO days later Hal showed such marked improvement that Dr. Hardesty rubbed his hands with satisfaction and declared his patient would soon be out of the woods and that all danger was practically past. At which news Mrs. May quietly fainted away, and April faced the double burden of an exhausted mother and a wounded brother. Then it was that Dorothea slipped into the breach.

"I can take care of Hal," she told April. "If he needs anything that I cannot attend to, I promise to call you; so you can stay with Aunt Parthenia."

April thanked her cousin gratefully.

"I knew I could count on you," she said, with something of her old warmth of manner. "I don't dare to trust Harriot. She would be stuffing him with dried persimmons, like as not, the minute my back was turned. And the servants are no good with sick people."

So Dorothea, feeling glad to be of use, sat down beside the bed where Hal seemed to be lightly sleeping.

She waved a fan gently to and fro to keep away stray flies, thinking over the months she had been in Georgia and all that had happened in that time. After all, in spite of the fact that she had lived near to the battle-fields, she had not seen very much to teach her the horrors of war. The few crippled

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soldiers that wandered along the road had not come fresh from the conflict as had Hal. The talk of thousands fallen in this or that battle had not come close to her before this. Now, all at once, she realized that those thousands had each a home, just as Hal May had, and that in each was a sorrowing mother or sister whose heart ached at the pain or death she could do naught to prevent.

"Except Val Tracy," she said to herself. "He says he has no kin to bother about him, and — and poor Lee Hendon too. He hasn't anybody, since his mother died."

And, as if she had spoken aloud, a voice beside her seemed to answer.

"Where did he go? Lee Hendon, I mean."

Dorothea came up straight in her chair, hardly able to believe her ears, for it was Hal who spoke. He was looking at her with inquiring eyes and she returned his gaze with an expression of bewildered amazement.

"What happened to Lee?" Hal demanded after a moment.

Dorothea was confused. She remembered that sick people needed to be humored but she had also heard that they should not be allowed to talk.

"Hadn't I better call April?" she asked gently, half rising from her chair.

"By no means," Hal answered positively. "I don't want her, above all people, to know of this. Tell me, what happened to Lee? Was he captured, after all?"

"You forget," Dorothea answered patiently, "that we haven't heard of him since his mother died, long ago."

Hal considered this for a moment, turning his bandaged head restlessly from side to side.

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"But you know Lee brought me home," he remarked a moment later. "I'd have died if it hadn't been for him."

This convinced Dorothea that Hal by no means knew what he was talking about.

"It's all right, Hal," she said soothingly. "Don't bother about it." She meant to calm him, feeling that this babbling about Lee Hendon would be most distressing to April and not wishing to summon her if she could avoid it.

"But he brought me home," Hal persisted. "I don't want any of the family to hear about it. April least of all. She's down on Lee, you know, and this would make it all the worse. Can't you tell me what has happened to him?"

"Hal, dear," Dorothea said firmly, thinking that he must be quieted, "you mustn't talk, must you? Please go to sleep and don't bother."

This seemed to have the reverse of a soothing effect on the patient.

"I believe he's captured," Hal cried, excitedly, "and you're all hiding it from me. And it will go hard with him, too. I must see about it. How long have I been here?" He started to raise himself from the bed. "Send for Big Jim," he ordered.

Dorothea was now half desperate.

"Hal," she insisted sternly, "listen to me and try to understand what I tell you. Lee Hendon did not bring you home. Your Big Jim brought you. He told us so himself. He put you in a mule cart with a lop-eared mule and drove you here. You just dreamed it was Lee Hendon. And you will make yourself ill if you go on like this. He isn't captured, that we know of, and besides the Yankees wouldn't harm him if he is. He'll be safe enough till after the war anyway. Don't fret about him and go to sleep."

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The ghost of a smile appeared on Hal's drawn and haggard face. Then he lay down quietly, evidently striving to gather strength against another encounter with this stubborn girl beside him, so that the next time he spoke Dorothea was impressed that what he said was not the result of delirium.

"You're a good sort, Dee," he began, "and I know I can trust you to keep a secret. Now please don't think I'm out of my head because I'm not now, whatever I may have been. Listen, I owe Lee Hendon my life. Do you understand that?"

"Yes," Dorothea answered.

"Good," replied Hal. "Lee saved my life and brought me in here, no matter what that rascal Big Jim had to say about it. He saw Big Jim and recognized him, knowing that he was my body-servant. Well, it was Lee paid for the cart and saw to it that I landed safely here. Big Jim couldn't possibly have managed it alone."

"Are you sure, Hal?" Dorothea asked.

"Positive," he replied firmly. "And he's in a tight place, so I must see that he gets out of it. If he's captured nothing can save him. He is in the Coulter Woods this minute waiting for word from me, and here I've been, lying on my back, doing nothing."

"You can't do anything now, Hal," Dorothea interrupted, seeing the certain drift of his talk. "You haven't the strength."

"But something must be done for him," Hal insisted.

"Very well, I'll help him," Dorothea answered.

He looked up at her a moment, his eyes growing moist.

"I think you're the only one who would, Dee,"

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he replied, lapsing into weakness again when he felt the responsibility lifted from his shoulders. "If you will pay my debt to him, I shall be easier in my mind."

"Of course, Hal," she assured him. "You can count on me."

He nodded his head slightly and then with a sigh dropped off to sleep, utterly exhausted.

It was easy enough for Hal to say, "Pay my debt," but Dorothea had no idea how that was to be accomplished. All she knew was that Lee Hendon was in Coulter Woods or at least that Hal thought so. As she speculated upon the matter she concluded that Lee and Hal had parted on the understanding that the former would remain there to receive the help he was in need of. But it was in no wise clear to Dorothea. Why should Hendon need help? In what danger did he stand? Washington was his home, and although he was not particularly popular with the more fanatical people of the town, there were many who understood something of his position and were entirely sympathetic with him. The more she pondered the matter the more she began again to believe that Hal was not quite himself, and that his illness and fever had been the cause of his curious state of mind in regard to Lee Hendon.

She sat beside the bed, gently fanning the tranquil patient when Harriot came in on tiptoe.

"How is he?" she asked in a whisper, settling herself on the floor beside Dorothea.

"He's better, I think," Dorothea whispered in answer.

"What he needs," Harriot remarked judicially, "is food. I'd be as weak as a kitten on the mushy stuff they feed him. I wish his mammy was here. She lives down on our plantation at Magnolia. She

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understands about sick people. She always gives you good things to eat."

April came in shortly and relieved Dorothea, but Harriot had plans for the afternoon and spoke of them as soon as they came out of the sick room.

"I say, Dee," she said, "let's go over and see Corinne. I think it would be fun to drive over ourselves and — and Corinne was in, asking after Hal, and she says their cook has just made some rice-flour cookies."

Dorothea hailed the suggestion promptly. She thought she saw a way of getting to Coulter Woods with no one the wiser, if it was important that the rest of the family should not know that Lee Hendon was lurking there. She did not understand why this should be so, but Hal's evident concern pointed to that conclusion. There was, of course, the possibility that Hal had been half delirious, but she dared not take that for granted. She must go to the woods alone and see if she could find Lee Hendon. So she acquiesced in Harriot's plans, and the two were shortly on the road for the Stewart house.

Mrs. Stewart, as usual, was busy packing. Piles of clothing, shoes, curtains, blankets, baskets of silver, packages of groceries, a confusion of all sorts of things blocked the doorway; but Mrs. Stewart greeted them as calmly as if she were in her reception room receiving the neighborhood.

"I sent for you to come up, my dears," she explained, "because I thought it would be a most valuable lesson to see how a person with real foresight and executive ability arranges for all the eventualities of travel."

With elaborate care she took a huge muff from its cedar box, examined it for moths and put it into one of the open trunks.

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"That is my Brazilian trunk," she remarked. "I am taking my furs there, because I am sure they will be quite unusual in Brazil, and a newcomer, you know, must make an impression at once."

"So you've decided to go to Brazil, Aunt Cora," Harriot said. "I wonder what kind of things they have to eat in Brazil," she added dreamily.

"I don't really know," her aunt replied quite seriously, "but I am quite sure they must be delicious, or we would have heard of it. Haven't you often noticed how people like to tell you about the awful things they have to put up with on their travels? I have, and yet never have I heard a complaint about Brazil; so I have concluded it must be a most ideal spot."

Dorothea chuckled.

"Yes, that's so," she said. "People are always telling you about the garlic in Italy and the smelly cheese in Norway, and —"

"And the rats in China," Harriot put in, not to be outdone.

"Exactly," Mrs. Stewart responded; "so, in my Mexican trunks, I am putting a few simple necessities in the food line." She selected some packages of groceries and settled them in another of the trunks. "Of course you know I can't live on the beans and peppery things that Mexicans eat."

"But you aren't going to *both* Mexico and Brazil?" Dorothea asked, her eyes opening in surprise.

"Of course not," Mrs. Stewart replied with considerable pride. "That's where my foresight comes in. I don't know which place I may finally decide to select, so I am packing for *both*."

At this announcement the girls exchanged amused glances, but Mrs. Stewart was diving into another trunk and did not see.

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Harriot stayed long enough to secure the refreshments that sooner or later were always forthcoming, and then she suddenly discovered a good reason why they should be getting home again.

"Are you really going this time, Aunt Cora?" Harriot asked as they were taking their departure.

"Almost any day now, my love," her aunt answered, "but I sha'n't go without seeing you-all once more."

"I wasn't thinking of that," Harriot answered frankly, though without the slightest intention of being rude. "I was just wondering who would get the peaches. You know, Dee," she went on, turning to Dorothea, "the Crosslands peaches are the best in the state."

"My dear child," Aunt Cora replied with gracious generosity, "you may have as many as you like when we are gone. Only I am afraid that the Yankees will take them all before you can get a chance at them."

"Huh!" grunted Harriot, bristling. "If those peaches are *mine*, it'll take a mighty smart Yankee to get them away from me. And besides, I can eat them greener than any upstart Northerner that ever was born. I've had practice."

"They're yours, honey, if we are away," her aunt replied with a laugh. "Only don't make yourself sick."

"Nothing ever makes me sick," Harriot replied proudly. "The more I eat the weller and weller I get."

"I know," sighed her aunt. "I'd give my small emerald ring for such a digestion as you have, Harriot. By the way, there's a raspberry tart somewhere. You might just as well eat it up. It disagreed with me horribly."

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"I have!" Harriot replied with a triumphant grin, and they went down stairs after saying good-by.

"As sure as you're born, Dee," Harriot said as they started to get into the carriage, "Aunt Cora won't go away now any more than she did the other times she started."

"I don't believe she will, either," Dorothea agreed absently, for her mind was upon the matter that had brought her there so willingly. She wanted to go through the Coulter Woods alone and she was now alert to seize the first opportunity that offered to try her plan.

Harriot, driving the old horse, chattered on, seemingly unmindful of Dorothea's indifferent answers, and presently they neared the place where the path entered the woods.

"My, but this is a slow horse," Dorothea suddenly remarked out of a clear sky; which was doing the animal something of an injustice, and Harriot immediately rushed to its defense, as Dorothea hoped she would.

"It's not so slow at all," Harriot contradicted promptly. "Mose isn't very young any more, but he's not so slow either."

"I could walk home quicker than we'll get there this way," Dorothea answered with exaggerated scorn.

"You could not," Harriot answered. "You couldn't possibly, even if you ran through the woods."

"Oh, pshaw," remarked Dorothea. "I could crawl through the woods and beat you home."

"I'll bet you our dessert for supper you can't!" Harriot challenged promptly and pulled up the horse at the path.

"All right," cried Dorothea, jumping down into

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the road. "We'll see who eats two desserts," and with a wave of her hand she plunged out of sight while Harriot chirped old Mose into a good trot.

Once safe from observation Dorothea slowed her walk to a saunter. Before she had attained her object she had pictured Lee Hendon as popping out from behind every bush; but now that she was actually among the trees she realized that if he was in hiding he would scarcely wish to be seen by a stranger wandering that way. Yet, if he was there, she must find him, for she did not know when another such chance would present itself.

She dared not call his name. It was possible, of course, that, save for him, she was the only person within miles; but she could not be certain of this. And how could she show him that she was a person to be trusted? That seemed a difficult thing to accomplish.

Then, of a sudden, she remembered her coming to the South under a flag of truce, honored alike by the Confederacy and the Union. She would show a white flag and if Lee Hendon saw her he would at least know that she was not an enemy.

Her handkerchief, she decided, was too small, but she had a large white veil and this she tied to the handle of her parasol. Then she walked slowly on, waving her improvised flag in the air.

But for a time she saw nothing of the man she sought. Now and then she would halt and look about her; but everything was silent and still, and, though she could imagine that the bushes hid all sorts of wild creatures, there was no movement to show of their existence.

She set off again, a little discouraged, but after a moment or two a sharp cracking of a twig off to her right, brought her to a stop. Again she looked back,

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peering into the closely growing underbrush and straining her ears, but there was no further sound and once more she walked slowly on.

For several minutes she continued on her way, when a low whistle halted her in her tracks. She was certain now that she was followed. She had felt it vaguely before, and the cracking of the twig had confirmed this sensation. Now the whistle was sure evidence, and she stood still and waited.

In a moment or two she heard the rustling sound of something moving through the bushes toward her, but could see nothing until a voice addressed her out of the thicket ten yards or so away.

"Are you looking for any one in particular?" came the low-toned inquiry.

"Yes," she answered, boldly, but her heart was beating a little faster than was its wont.

"Who sent you?" was the next challenge.

"Hal May," she returned. The bushes parted and the man whose face she had seen at the window the night of her first party at the Mays' stood before her.

But at the sight of him she drew back with a little cry of surprise and fear.

"You're not Lee Hendon?" she faltered. "You can't be!"

"Of course I am," he replied gravely, and then Dorothea understood something in Hal's talk that had puzzled her, for Lee Hendon was dressed in the uniform of a Union officer.

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CHAPTER XXI

IN COULTER WOODS

THE first thought that came into Dorothea's mind when she saw Lee Hendon in the uniform of a Northern officer was concerned with April.

"Does she know?" the girl questioned herself, and found no ready answer. The suspicion had held in her mind that April was in communication with Lee Hendon; but it was not a suspicion likely to be shared by Hal, who, it was plain enough, had confided his mission to her, because, so far as he was aware, there was no other in the household who would have undertaken it.

This passed through her mind in a flash, for the young man before her seemed ill at ease and glanced about him apprehensively.

"You are very good to have come," he said most politely. "I do not know who you are; but —"

"I am Mrs. May's niece," Dorothea interrupted. "My name is Dorothea Drummond and my home was in England."

"Oh, I see," Hendon replied comprehendingly. "I am most anxious to know how Hal is coming on. He was in a rather desperate condition when I last saw him."

"To-day is really the first time he has had his senses," Dorothea answered. "That is the reason there was no word from him sooner. He spoke to

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me of you this morning and I am here to find out how I can help you to get away."

"What I want principally," Hendon responded quickly, "is a Confederate uniform."

Now for the second time within a few days Dorothea was asked to play what she felt to be a treacherous part to those whose hospitality she was enjoying. She knew in her heart that her sympathy for the Northern cause was growing and realized she would be glad to see the war end in favor of the Union. Yet here was a Federal officer asking for aid, which she had no more right to give than she had had in the case of Larry Stanchfield. All she could do was what she thought Hal might contrive were he here in her stead. Indeed, as far as a uniform was concerned, the granting of Lee Hendon's request was beyond her power.

"You must know that is impossible," she replied. "Confederate uniforms are hard to obtain."

"Of course that's true," he granted. "I was only hoping Hal might have an extra one. These clothes are a bit awkward."

"Yes," she nodded, realizing that here lay his reason for hiding even from his former friends in the little town.

"If you can bring me some money," he said, finally, after a moment of deep thought, "I shall be able to manage. All that I had and all that Hal had was spent in getting him home."

"I brought some gold with me, thinking that was what you might need," Dorothea replied, and held out to him a netted silk purse heavy with coins.

He took it mechanically, but shook his head and smiled.

"It was most thoughtful of you, but it wouldn't be of the least use to me, you know. Where I am go-

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ing, I couldn't find a soul to change a ten-dollar gold piece. Haven't you any paper money?"

"I'm sorry," Dorothea replied, genuinely grieved at her lack of foresight. "It was stupid of me, wasn't it, not to have realized that difficulty? I thought gold would be just the thing you would want."

"Under ordinary conditions you would have been quite right," Hendon hastened to assure her. "You have not the slightest reason to accuse yourself of thoughtlessness, and I must seem like a most ungrateful brute; but you see my life really depends upon it."

"I can get you paper for it right away," Dorothea suggested.

"That will be good of you," he answered. "How soon do you think you can have it for me?"

"I can go into the village to-morrow morning," Dorothea replied, and then hesitated. "But I can't tell when I will be able to get off alone again."

"And I dare not loiter about in these woods," he told her. "It's running too great a risk."

"Then where can I meet you?" Dorothea asked. "Where are you living?" she added.

"With some turpentine gatherers," he replied. "They have a hut deep in the woods, and —"

"Couldn't I go there with the money?" Dorothea broke in.

"You would never find the place," Lee said, with a shake of his head. "It would be easier for you to come back here, but I shall want to know exactly when to expect you. Which is your room in the May house?" he ended.

"The one at the southwest corner," she replied after an instant's effort to fix the points of the compass.

"Good," he replied. "That is the first bit of

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luck we've had so far. I can see that room from a place I know in the woods. When you're sure you'll have a chance to get here alone, pull the curtain down all the way. If it is at night and you plan to reach me the next morning, a lighted candle will tell me. I haven't much else to do, so I'll be watching most of the time," he added with a pathetic smile.

"Very well," Dorothea agreed and prepared to start on.

"Don't bring all that money in bills," he cautioned her. "Five hundred dollars in State notes and two thousand, say, in Confederate money will be ample."

"That hardly seems enough," she replied, remembering Lucy's saying that it took a barrelful of Confederate money to pay for the bung-hole.

"It will be plenty," he assured her. "Good-by, and thank you very, very much for coming to my aid."

He held out his hand and Dorothea took it, but at that moment there came the sounds of footsteps on the path beyond them.

"Go quickly, it's Harriot looking for me," she whispered, and Lee Hendon plunged into the thicket.

Dorothea turned, expecting to see her young cousin ready with a bantering remark at her slowness, but to her great astonishment April came toward her, walking at a rather rapid pace. An instant later the two girls stopped short and stared at each other.

To Dorothea there was but one explanation of this sudden appearance of April's. She must have heard that Lee Hendon was hiding in the neighborhood. She wondered what excuse her beautiful cousin would make.

"I didn't expect to see you here," April remarked. "I thought you were driving with Harry."

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"We have a wager on whether the horse can beat me home," Dorothea answered, but at the moment she said it there came a crash in the bushes as if some one had fallen, in tripping over a log.

April's keen glance went to Dorothea's face and read there something of the confusion the younger girl felt. They stood in silence, awaiting a repetition of the strange noise, but there was no further sound.

"That was a rather curious commotion for these woods," April said significantly.

"Are there deer about here?" Dorothea asked, quite calm now and returning her cousin's look quietly. "Or bears? I didn't know there were any large animals in this part of the country. But how comes it, April, that you are not with Hal?"

"Mother is there," the girl answered. "She is better and wished me to get out into the air for a little while. I want something from Aunt Cora, and was on my way there."

Dorothea nodded as if she understood. She did not dare to speak for fear of betraying the skepticism she felt at this explanation of April's presence in the woods.

"I must hurry on," she said, taking a step forward, "or Harriot will be coming to find me. Hope you have a nice walk." And off she ran, leaving her cousin gazing after her for a moment or two.

"It was a blue uniform I saw, after all!" April said to herself as she walked on again.

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CHAPTER XXII

BY GRAPEVINE TELEGRAPH

AS Dorothea had expected, she found Harriot waiting for her and forestalled any questions by setting her cousin's thoughts upon the two portions of dessert that were in store for her.

"You win!" she cried as soon as she was within speaking distance. "I only hope you don't make yourself sick eating too many sweet things."

"Huh!" Harriot expostulated, forgetting how long she had been waiting for Dorothea and her speculations upon the cause of the delay. "Somebody is always telling me that, and it doesn't do the slightest good."

They argued the matter at length, and Dorothea thus avoided an explanation she was by no means ready to give.

But it was with some difficulty that she kept her thoughts upon the conversation she herself had started, for her mind dwelt constantly on the problems she had yet to meet. It would not be any too easy for her to go back to Lee Hendon unobserved, and she felt that there was great need of his getting away as soon as possible. April's sudden appearance on the scene seemed to indicate a knowledge of her lover's presence there. Dorothea was not inclined to accept the fact that her cousin's arrival was purely accidental and was of the opinion that the two she had left might even now be talking to each other,

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yet in that case assistance from her seemed superfluous. Altogether it remained a puzzle.

When they reached the house Merry was there to meet them.

"Please, Miss Dee," said the girl, "Marse Hal, he's a grievin' foh yoh, and Ol' Miss she says will yoh jes' look in on him a minute and see if yoh can quieten him down lak? She's dressin' and wants Lil' Marse to go to sleep."

Dorothea went directly to Hal's room and knocked at the door. Big Jim opened it with a finger on his lips to enjoin silence; but, seeing who it was, he stepped aside, and she went in quickly.

"I'm glad to see you, Dorothea," Hal said in a whisper; but in his searching eyes she read the question he was so anxious to have answered.

She leaned over the bed with a word of greeting, patting and adjusting the pillows under his head.

"It's all right," she whispered. "I've seen Lee. I expect to give him some money to-morrow. Then he can get away in a hurry, can't he?"

Hal nodded his head and a smile came over his drawn face.

"Good girl," he murmured. "Now I can go to sleep," and without another word he turned over on his side and fell into a quiet doze almost as he spoke.

And Dorothea at last understood why Hal had been so much troubled over this matter. To be in debt to an enemy is a burden hard to bear, and the young man could not rest content until that debt had been discharged. But Dorothea knew also that Lee Hendon deserved more credit than he was ever likely to get from those for whom he had risked his life. The blue uniform he wore added enormously to the danger he had run to save the life of April's brother. Yet he had taken the risk, spent his scanty supply of

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money, put his life in jeopardy for the friend of his youth, and all for the sake of the girl he loved. Dorothea was convinced that Lee Hendon was a brave man, and the more she thought of what he had done the more she found to admire in him. No doubt he would be called a traitor to his country. No doubt the fact that he had not volunteered to fight for the South when the war broke out would be but added evidence of his disloyalty. It would be said that he only awaited a favorable opportunity to turn his back upon the land that had given him birth, and that his mother's illness was made his excuse. They might go further and say that he had remained in the South as long as he could in order to furnish information to the Yankees, for whom he had renounced his country and his kin. All this might be said with some show of evidence to back it, and Dorothea did not disguise from herself that the part of spy and traitor was not one to be admired, no matter how one's sympathies were drawn. Yet, with all these things in her mind, she could not help a growing admiration for the young man.

And what of April? Granting that she knew of his presence, did she know what Lee Hendon was doing? And if so, what excuse could she give for her complicity? The puzzle grew constantly more and more complex. Dorothea failed to make head or tail out of it.

"It's all so mixed up," she said to herself, "that I wouldn't be surprised to be told I'm the only Red String there is, after all."

Later in the day she went down stairs, and seated herself on the porch, waiting for Miss Imogene, whose return was expected, and planning how to find an opportunity to secure the money to take to Coulter Woods. She would not rest easy until she had

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done her part to enable Lee Hendon to rejoin his friends in the North.

Then her thoughts went to Larry Stanchfield. She had scarcely had time to think of him at all, and now she wondered how he fared and speculated upon the motives that had made Val Tracy take such an important part in the young man's previous escape.

"I will be glad to have Cousin Imogene back," she said to herself, as the carriage rolled up the drive and drew up to let the dainty little lady she was thinking of descend in state, spreading her furbelows magnificently.

"I was just this minute wishing you were here!" Dorothea exclaimed, throwing her arms about Miss Imogene. It was unusual, for the English bred girl was not given to such demonstrations of affection, and the older woman was a little surprised.

"I believe you are glad to see me," she said, as she kissed Dorothea. "It is just like an American welcome you gave me."

"Well, I'm half American," Dorothea answered with an embarrassed little laugh. She realized that in giving way to this impulse she was running counter to her training; but, curiously enough, she didn't care. "Sometimes I'm sorry I'm not all American."

"You will be, in time," Miss Imogene replied lightly, taking a chair beside the one Dorothea had been occupying. "Sit down, dear, and tell me your news."

"How did you know I had any news?" demanded Dorothea, her eyes widening with surprise.

"I guessed," Miss Imogene answered, "and now I know. Come, out with it!"

"I have seen Mr. Stanchfield again," the girl whispered, after looking about her to make sure she was

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not overheard. "He was disguised as a wounded Confederate soldier."

There was no doubt Miss Imogene was interested. She leaned close to Dorothea and urged her to tell all she knew, listening with scarcely an interruption till the tale was finished.

"And so Val Tracy helped him away," Miss Ivory murmured at the end, more than half to herself. "I wonder what is behind that?"

"I think I know," Dorothea said, in a low voice. "Val is a Red String."

Miss Imogene turned to the girl beside her with a quick motion, as if she was surprised.

"I never thought of that. What makes you say so?" she asked.

"There isn't any other way to explain it," Dorothea replied. "He must be something like that, otherwise —"

She broke off, and for a moment or two they both sat thinking over the situation.

"It is of course an explanation," Miss Imogene commented, "but I don't know whether it is a reasonable one or not. I don't know." She repeated the words several times, evidently puzzled. "After all the main thing is that the boy escaped. But now he's come back and is in a worse position than he was then. He'll be shot if he's caught this time."

"He didn't seem at all afraid of that," Dorothea explained. "He was only impatient to be on his way to warn the Union men. I couldn't help in that, of course; but I confess, Cousin Imogene, I hope he succeeds."

"You're more of a Yankee than you were when I left," Miss Imogene returned with something of a smile. "But you mustn't talk to me about it. Nor to any one else," she added. "They don't want

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Yankee sympathizers in this country, nor yet in this house, honey, so you must be careful what you say."

"Of course," Dorothea answered. "And it isn't that I want the South to be beaten exactly. Only, I do want this war to end —"

"Oh, you are such an imaginative person, Dorothea," Miss Imogene cut in sharply. Out of the corner of her eye she saw the figure of April coming up to the open window behind them. "And you haven't asked me anything about my trip. My dear, it was dreadful. The roads are lakes."

"Is that you, Cousin Imogene?" cried April through the window, and then Dorothea understood why the conversation had been changed so abruptly.

April's welcome of Miss Imogene was obviously sincere, but very shortly she made an excuse to leave them, and the two were alone again.

"I wonder why April doesn't like me?" Dorothea speculated half-musingly.

"Oh, but she does," Miss Imogene remarked with a smile.

"No, she doesn't," Dorothea insisted with a laugh. "If you just watch — you'll see. You won't notice anything at first, but in a little while you'll find out she simply can't bear me."

The elder woman pondered this statement for a moment. Then she shook her head.

"If April had cared a rap for Val Tracy — but she never did," Miss Imogene said, half to herself. "No, no, child! You're just imagining things."

"I'm sure I'm right, Cousin Imogene," Dorothea maintained, firm in her opinion of the matter. "And besides, I don't see what Val Tracy has to do with it."

"Speak of angels and you'll hear the rustle of their wings," cried a voice behind them and Captain

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Tracy himself stepped upon the gallery floor, having come across the thick grass of the lawn so noiselessly that they had not heard his approach.

"Listeners never hear any good of themselves, you mean," Miss Imogene laughed, giving him her hand.

"Faith, that's why I didn't listen," he responded promptly, as he bowed over the dainty fingers.

Dorothea's welcome was more cordial than she was aware and as the tall young Irishman looked down into her eyes he could have little doubt that she was glad to see him. The girl herself would have given a good deal to know what was going on behind his humorous, twinkling eyes, and began to realize, now that he was back, that she had missed him more than she had thought.

"And what has brought you out of the clouds after all this time?" demanded Miss Imogene a little later.

"The same old thing," he replied with a reckless laugh. "Horses! They're mighty useful, you know, when it comes to fighting and we're going to have our fill of that or I'm an Orangeman!"

At his words April popped her head out of the window.

"Is this our brave Captain Tracy come to threaten us," she laughed gayly.

She stood inside holding out her hand to the young man, who took it eagerly. "I'm mighty glad to see you," she went on, her tones warm and friendly.

"And I'm glad to be back even for a little while," he answered.

"What is the news from Richmond?" April asked a moment later.

Tracy shook his head doubtfully.

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"Not the best, if what I hear is true," he answered, the smile fading from his lips.

"We have rumors, too, by grapevine telegraph," April responded, referring to a name given to the mysterious means of communication that seemed to exist among the negroes and the poorer classes of whites. "But I'm not afraid that 'Marse Robert' will be beaten. He's more than a match for your old Grant!"

"He's not my Grant," Tracy protested. "But, whatever happens, there's some grand fighting ahead of us."

"Why, Val Tracy," cried Harriot, as she burst upon the scene. "Where did you come from? I thought you'd given us up for good."

"Bad pennies are not so easily gotten rid of," he laughed, and taking one of her hands he bent down as if to kiss it, but instead took a generous bite of the cake it held. "Faith, 'tis good I'm here to help save a noble digestion."

"Huh!" grunted Harriot, "a little bit of cake like that wouldn't hurt me. I could eat three times that much — if I could get it. But Aunt Decent says we're poor now and I'll have to stop hooking cake. You can have this," she went on, holding out the piece Tracy had bitten, "and if you'll hold my other slice I'll go back and get more. I reckon Aunt Decent isn't expecting me just now."

Shortly after this Mrs. May came out to welcome the new Captain and to congratulate him upon his promotion. And the conversation became centered upon matters of general utility. Val, although uncertain, thought he might stay for perhaps a day or two and the women immediately began planning for the patching of his clothes and shirts. They were all glad to see him. He brought them news of the

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outside world, gossip of the camps, messages from friends and relatives, and in a little while they were all sitting about him, busy with their needles while he talked of the things nearest all their hearts and answered the many questions they put to him.

Presently, in the midst of their talk, Aunt Dilsey's Sam came shuffling around the corner of the house and stopped before them. He took off his hat and drew nearer, waiting till Mrs. May should recognize his presence.

"Is there something you want, Sam?" she asked, in a pause in the conversation.

"Yes, Ol' Miss," he said, hesitatingly. "I've been thinkin' a mighty lot lately since you-all has bought we-all, and, please'm, I'd be 'bliged if you-all would sell me to that Macon man, jes' as quick as eveh you can."

"Sell you, Sam?" exclaimed Mrs. May in great surprise. "Sell you — and keep Aunt Dilsey?"

"Yes'm, that's what I'm thinkin'," the boy replied, and there was in his manner a not quite understandable hint of suppressed excitement. "You see, Ol' Miss, that Macon man he ain't got no manneh of use for my gran'mam nohow; but he's mighty ready to give a good price fo' Sam. Please, Ol' Miss, sell me, and sell me quick."

The request was a strange one, and Mrs. May, used to dealing with these simple people, expressed no further surprise at it, but sought the reasons behind it.

"Why have you decided that you want to be sold?" she asked kindly.

"It ain't that I's 'zackly *wantin'*, Ol' Miss," the boy replied, his eagerness growing with his decreasing embarrassment. "That Macon man, he's

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meaner 'an dirt and that's why I wants you to sell me to him."

He looked up with a broad grin on his face, seeming to think he had made himself perfectly plain and that somewhere hidden in his words was a huge joke upon some one.

"You want to be sold to a mean man?" Mrs. May repeated. "I don't understand you, Sam."

"Well, Ol' Miss, it's like this," the boy began, trying to make his explanation clear. "These Yanks is a-coming. Yes'm, we-all ain't got no doubt o' that, and so I's figgerin' I'd be free, anyways, and I'd a heap ruther that Macon man should lose me than my Ol' Miss, when she was so kind and bought me an' my ol' gran'mam. But there ain't much time to waste, Ol' Miss. You heah what I's tellin' yoh."

"Why are you so sure the Yanks are coming, Sam?" April asked.

"Why, Lil' Miss, I jes' nachally knows it," he answered. "We-all down in the quarters is a-talkin' hit oveh, and there ain't no doubt 'bout it. Why, Lil' Miss, don' you-all know that this heah Yankee General has beat Marse Robert Lee?"

"Who told you that?" demanded Val Tracy, suddenly turning on the boy.

"Nobody don't tol' us, Cap'n Tracy, we jes' knows it, that's all." The boy looked up with a bland smile on his face that was wholly free from the slightest trace of guile.

"The grapevine telegraph again," Tracy murmured under his breath, shaking his head in deep perplexity.

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CHAPTER XXIII

SECRETS

MRS. MAY dismissed Sam almost immediately, saying a word of her appreciation, but also insisting that his proposal was out of the question.

"Whatever happens, Sam," she told him, "your home will be here. If you get your freedom, then you can stay or go as you like; but we shall always be glad to have our people stay. Now go back to your work and say no more about being sold."

The moment the boy was gone April turned to Tracy.

"Val," she demanded, her face white and drawn, "can it be possible that Lee has surrendered?"

"Yes," he answered reluctantly. "It is possible. We had word of a battle at Five Forks and, if we've lost it, I don't see what else General Lee could do. I'm afraid Sam's news is true, but we shall know for certain very shortly."

"Then the war will soon be ended," Mrs. May said prayerfully.

April raised her head as if to speak, her eyes flashing angrily; but her white lips trembled and of a sudden she left them.

With the arrival of the train to Washington all doubt of the events that had taken place at Richmond were put at rest. Lee had surrendered and Jefferson Davis was in flight. The Confederacy was breaking fast.

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After supper that night Dorothea, looking out of her window, saw April and Val Tracy walking together on the lawn, deep in earnest conversation.

"It is little wonder he is in love with her," she thought, and turned away with just the faintest of sighs. Possibly she did not know that she sighed.

But in thinking that their conversation had anything to do with love, Dorothea was very much mistaken.

"The grapevine telegraph doesn't carry all the news," Val was saying to April in a half whisper.

"What do you mean by that?" she asked.

"It isn't all over yet," he went on, glancing about to make sure he was not overheard. "We have a shot left in our locker that may surprise the Yanks."

"Tell me, Val," she demanded eagerly.

"There's an expedition planned against the Union forces at Savannah," he went on in an undertone. "But it's very secret and there are only a few of us who know it. If it is successful it may have a greater influence than you would believe. The North is tired of the war and the South will be discouraged over this bad news of Lee. But if we capture Savannah again we shall find the Confederacy ready to fight on and the Union ready to come to some compromise. If not, we shall organize in Texas and continue the war."

"But can you get the men, Val?" April asked, the color coming back into her face. "Oh, it would be glorious if we could strike another blow. And it might make all the difference. Can you do it, do you think?"

"We can, if the secret is kept," he replied gravely. "With the Yankees unprepared we can beat them. We are gathering men from all over the State. Volunteers, and what troops we can find, and we are

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sending them to a rendezvous. But all must be done sub rosa. Even our officers are not aware of what's afoot. The Yanks must be taken by surprise, and if they are, the city will be ours. So you see the importance of letting as few know of it as possible. If we succeed in surprising them we'll drive every Yankee out of the State."

"You'll do it, Val, I feel sure of it," April whispered enthusiastically. "No one will betray you and it will put new heart into the South."

"Exactly!" Val replied. "It's a fine plan. We know what the Yankees are doing and they don't know anything of our movements. They think Georgia hasn't any soldiers, but they'll find out differently. But be careful, April. Don't breathe a word of it even in your sleep. Faith, I suppose I shouldn't have told you, but you were so upset over this bad news I just couldn't help giving you something to hope for. I trust we shall succeed. In fact I know we shall, if the secret is kept."

"Then, Val," April said, dropping her voice, "be careful what you say around here."

"Oh, there's nobody in the family who would betray us," he answered lightly.

"Don't be too sure of that," she returned.

"Whom do you mean, April?" he questioned.

"I am not sure, but —" She hesitated. "No, I don't want to do any one an injustice. I may be mistaken, but I am on the watch. Under any circumstances don't breathe a word of your plans to another living soul. Promise, Val."

"Faith, I promise with all my heart," he answered. "I hadn't any intention of even telling you."

"How long will you be here?" she asked a moment later.

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"Till I get orders to move," he replied. "A day or so at most. In the meantime I shall be out, looking for horses and getting together any men that I can find."

Dorothea noticed that April's eyes were sparkling as they had not sparkled for a long time when she came into the room after her stroll upon the lawn with Val Tracy. And this brought another thought to plague the girl. Could it be that April was fond of Val? That, in spite of all she had heard, it was this young Irishman her cousin really cared for and not Lee Hendon?

"I can easily understand how she might," she said to herself.

Nor was Dorothea the only one in the room to notice the difference in April's spirits and to find a possible cause for it. Miss Imogene, her bright eyes taking in all that went on about her, watched the girl for a moment and then shook her head.

"It would be too bad," she thought enigmatically.

It was Dorothea April had in mind when she warned Tracy that there might be one in the family who would betray his secret. Her conviction of the rightfulness of the Confederate cause made it impossible, at times, for her not to be swayed by her prejudices. Almost from the day of Dorothea's arrival she had harbored a suspicion of her cousin's purpose in visiting them. From the moment she learned that a band of Northern sympathizers were actually at work in the South she could not forget that Dorothea wore a red band of velvet around her wrist. She was never without it, and once having seized upon the idea, April was constantly on the lookout for some other evidence that would connect her cousin directly with the "Red Strings."

There was nothing in the girl's actions to confirm

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these suspicions save the wearing of that red band about her wrist. The fact that a prisoner escaped from Andersonville had passed their way was no matter for surprise. Such escapes were frequent, and no particular importance could be attached to that event. In addition she had a genuine liking for Dorothea. In the year that had passed since her cousin had come to visit them there were times when she had entirely forgotten the doubt that haunted her. It was so vague and so improbable that she was rather ashamed of her lack of trust and had been careful to tell no one of it. She appreciated that Dorothea had not the same intense love for the Confederate cause that she had, but she was also too sensible a person to expect it. Indeed she wanted to be fair, but her suspicion persisted and the most careless act which held a shadow of suggestion that could strengthen this belief her mind fastened on tenaciously. And, as the fortunes of the Confederacy became more and more desperate, April, with nerves at tension, was ready to distort any innocent action into some evidence of treachery.

Early in the year something had happened to again fasten her suspicions upon Dorothea. She did not remember long what this had been, but every day she had watched for confirmation of her growing conviction. She was no longer able to conceal what she felt and so took the precaution to avoid being alone with her cousin lest she betray her feelings. So certain had she become that she was right that she determined to have absolute proof before she made any accusations either to the girl herself or to her mother. And so, day by day, she kept her own council; but there was scarcely a time in her waking hours that she was not entirely aware of where Dorothea was and what she did.

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A flag of truce, honored alike by the Confederacy and the Union.

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And yet when the moment came for her to find confirmation of her worst suspicions, she was shocked. Her walk through the woods the day before had been taken without thought of Dorothea and she had come across her cousin quite unexpectedly. But she had seen a man disappear into the bushes and was sure that he wore a dark blue uniform.

April's first impulse had been to accuse the girl then and there, but her sense of justice held her back. Perhaps Dorothea would offer voluntary explanation, though she did not think this a possibility. Once having resisted the natural impulse to speak out, she had time to consider the situation more calmly, and concluded that she would lose nothing by waiting, and perhaps might gain much. If the man she had seen was a Union spy, and she began firmly to believe that he was, to capture him would be a service for the cause and a complete case against Dorothea. Moreover, in order to do this, she must not let her cousin have the faintest idea that she was suspected. She argued that her arrival upon the scene in the woods had interrupted an interview that in all likelihood would be renewed at the first opportunity, and April meant to be there and catch them red-handed.

Next morning, therefore, when she saw her cousin leave the house dressed for a walk, April seized a hat to follow, thinking at first that the trail would lead to Coulter Woods. It was obvious at once that Dorothea had no intention of going in that direction but was bending her steps to the village, and she changed her plans. Plainly Dorothea had no intention then of meeting the Federal soldier; but April felt that her cousin's errand was of importance and that she must know what it was.

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In the streets of so small a village it would be wellnigh impossible to spy upon her undetected. She was especially anxious now that Dorothea should not have the slightest inkling of the fact that she was being observed, and to meet April in town, on foot, would be unusual enough to cause comment. Some thought of sending her maid, Merry, occurred to April, but she shook her head, feeling that it was impossible to have a servant spy upon her cousin. Whatever was to be done she must do herself.

Turning into the house she ran upstairs, picking up, as she went, a pair of battered field-glasses that hung on the wall near the hall-stand. Then she went directly to the garret and dropped to her knees on the floor beside the moon-shaped window at one end. The glass was gray with dust, but her handkerchief was not the filmy bit of linen and lace it would have been some years before and she did not hesitate to use it upon one of the small panes. Next she adjusted her glasses and looked into the principal street of the town, where she could distinguish clearly all who passed.

This was no new game for April. As a child she had often watched from this garret to see what was going on, and she had no difficulty now in picking out the various buildings. The Court House was the most prominent, and she thought of the day when Secession was declared and the "Bonny blue flag" made by Miss Fanny Andrews had been raised over it. She commanded a full view of the business portion of the town, but she had time to wonder if Judge Andrews, sturdily loyal to the Union, had ever learned of his daughter's part in the wild enthusiasm that had gone on while he sat behind darkened windows, before Dorothea walked across the square, putting a stop to all such memories.

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"She may be going to call upon Mrs. Robertson," April thought, and then, a moment later, "Oh, how stupid of me. Of course he would need money!"

She had seen her cousin walk purposefully into the bank, and her conclusions were natural. There was no further need to spy just then. It would be Dorothea's next adventure that would be important. April put her glasses in their case and, slipping downstairs, hung them in their place. Thereafter she kept out of sight, feeling certain that Dorothea would do nothing more until after dinner.

Later that morning she went into the parlor upon some errand, and the sound of low-pitched voices coming from the porch, reached her.

"— and if this expedition against Savannah —" Dorothea was saying when Miss Imogene had interrupted her, with a decided "Hush!"

For April the words held a world of significance, and instinctively she turned and tiptoed away.

Evidently her cousin knew all about the expedition to capture Savannah, and was doing her best to thwart the efforts of the Southern leaders. That was why she was in communication with a Union spy. He was to warn the Federal forces that they were to be attacked. She was preparing to furnish him money and information, using her relationship with them and taking advantage of their hospitality to betray their cause. In her heart April's anger grew hot at the thought. There was no longer any doubt in her mind about Dorothea's treachery. She would have denounced her cousin then and there, but now she appreciated that more than this was involved. It had been something of a personal affair heretofore. She had only had a desire to prove her cousin a Northern sympathizer. Now, however, the situation assumed a more serious aspect. If the spy

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escaped to tell the plans of the attack on Savannah, all the hopes in which she had indulged would be shattered. Therefore she must step carefully and conceal her anger against Dorothea for the sake of capturing the spy. That was the most important object for the time being. What should be done about her cousin's activities in the Northern interests could come later.

"But how did she hear of it?" April suddenly questioned herself. And an answer popped into her head almost simultaneously. Val was the only one who knew of it. Who else could have told her? And moreover April, wise in the affairs of the heart, guessed that the gay Irish Captain had been more than a little attracted by this handsome English girl who had come among them. Pretty speeches he made to every one, but she had noted again and again the thoughtful way in which his eyes followed Dorothea whenever she was in sight. She remembered that he spoke of her cousin, not in the exaggerated, complimentary way that was his habit, but gently, with words that seemed to come from a sincere feeling. She had anticipated that one day there might be a love affair between them, and she was not one of the selfish beauties who resented any man's attention to another. She liked Val Tracy, as she did twenty other young fellows who paid their court to her, but she felt no spark of jealousy on Dorothea's account.

It was not unnatural then that she should jump to the conclusion that Val, trusting the girl, had told her what was afoot, and that Dorothea had been quick to make use of it to warn the Yankees. Val had returned from one of his expeditions but she had no chance to speak to him until after dinner; then she led him out on to the lawn where they could

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talk in the certainty of not being overheard, but she had seen Dorothea go up to her room and took pains to make sure that she could not leave the house unobserved.

"Now what good deed have I done that I should be thus rewarded?" asked Tracy when he and April were alone.

"It isn't a time for pretty speeches, Val," she answered. "The Yankees are going to be warned of our plans to take Savannah!"

He looked at her in amazement for a moment, without speaking, as if he could not believe his ears.

"It's impossible, April," he answered. "There aren't half a dozen people in the world know of it. And two of them are right here. We haven't even told our officers. It's impossible!"

"No, it isn't, Val," she answered. "Some one else knows. Some one right here. One of the family, and we are about to be betrayed. It may already be too late, but I hope not."

"Who is it?" demanded Tracy shortly.

"Dorothea," April answered, and looked keenly at him, expecting to read in his face a confirmation of her conclusion that he had told her cousin of the plan.

But Tracy showed nothing of that sort. Instead, he laughed lightly as if his mind had been eased of a burden.

"That's out of the question, April," he replied. "Dorothea wouldn't betray any one. I'll stake my life on that. I don't know what notion you have in your head, but there's a mistake somewhere."

"Listen, Val," April began earnestly, and then told him exactly what she had seen and what her suspicions were.

Undoubtedly Tracy was impressed by the story.

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No one listening to the intense way in which April spoke could doubt that she firmly believed what she said.

"Are you certain you saw a Union man?" Tracy asked, as if it was hard to believe.

"There is not the slightest doubt of it, Val," she replied.

"Well, then, whatever the explanation of her meeting him may be, he must be taken." Tracy had made up his mind at once who this mysterious person was. Once before he had taken a hand in helping to free a Federal officer, but then it was an escaped prisoner from Andersonville and, for the sake of a sentiment he held, he had closed his eyes to his duty. That he could not do again. Now a matter of vital importance to the cause for which he fought was at stake. He was not one to be indifferent to his oath of allegiance. He had his own notion of the meaning of this meeting, but he could not run the risk of its being nothing but a love affair.

"So you see, Val," April remarked, "we must follow Dorothea and capture the fellow."

"Yes," he answered with a shade of reluctance in his voice. "Yes, that we must do. Or I must."

"I am going with you," April insisted. "I want to do something myself. Oh, if I were only a man."

"Faith, and I'm glad you're not," Tracy replied, "but ye shall come if ye want to. If there's any shooting to be done I'll do it, I promise you. But I hate sneaking up behind a girl. Ye'll be giving me countenance, for to tell you the truth I don't like warring on women."

"It isn't that, Val," she assured him. "As far as Dorothea is concerned, you can leave her to me."

"That's just what I don't want to do," he replied,

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"You females haven't much pity for each other, you know."

"Why should I have any pity for one who has come into our house to play the spy?" demanded April.

"Wait, my dear, till you're sure," Tracy answered. "I'll go bail she isn't betraying anybody; but we must see for ourselves."

"Very well," April answered, "and now we must go away from here. She is probably watching us from her window, and so long as we are in sight she won't move. We must give her a chance to get away unobserved — as she will think. You'd better go off to the stables. I'll run up to my room and let you know when she has gone."

Tracy nodded and went off. He didn't like the business, but it had to be gone through with.

"I wish April could have found some one else to help her," he murmured, as he turned the corner of the house. "It's a mean game, this, interfering with a love affair. But war's no respecter of conventions. And she'll hate me for it, bad luck to it!"

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CHAPTER XXIV.

FACE TO FACE

MEANWHILE, Dorothea having returned from a successful trip to the bank was making for her room when she encountered a disgruntled Harriot.

"Oh, Dee!" she cried, "that old governess has come back again and she says I have to work harder than ever to make up what I've lost while she was away. That means I shan't have any fun this afternoon."

"What were you going to do?" Dorothea asked, not having heard of any particular plans.

"I don't know," Harriot confessed, "but it would have been something very nice, I'm sure. We should have thought of it, but now I've just got to study, and you'll go off and have a lovely time by yourself."

That is exactly what Dorothea planned to do the moment she learned she would be free, but she did not tell Harriot so.

"It's too bad," she murmured sympathetically, "but there will be other days, you know."

"Yes, and they'll be rainy!" Harriot replied complainingly and with justification, for the weather had been anything but dry, though there had been a bright sun for the last week.

"But really it's very warm to-day," Dorothea consoled her. "You'll be cooler in the house than outdoors. I'm so hot that I'm going upstairs to put on a cooler dress."

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This was all true enough, and her walk to the village had brought a bright flush to her cheeks, but she had another motive in going upstairs. She found Lucy ready to help her and her first words to the girl showed her intention.

"Pull down the curtain, Lucy," she said, "there's such a glare."

The girl did as she was ordered, but not without a grumbling protest.

"Does you-all want all the shades down, Miss Dee?" she asked. "It's monstrous unlucky. Looks lak some one was dade."

"No, just the end one will do," Dorothea answered. "I've been walking in the sun and I think a half-light will be pleasanter, don't you?"

"Yes'm," Lucy agreed, "but yoh ain't got no call to be runnin' out in the sun that a-way. Little ladies like you is, should be takin' their ease and havin' Lucy fannin' 'em with a pa'm leaf when it's so hot. 'Deed, it would sure be a good thing foh that imp Itty what takes care o' Miss Harry to have some wo'k. They says ole Satan always finds some mischief foh idle hands, an' I reckon it's the same with tongues. That Itty certainly done talk like she ain't got nothin' else to do, 'ceptin' 't is slanderin' folks."

"What's the matter with Itty?" asked Dorothea, knowing the question was expected of her, though in reality her thoughts were on Lee Hendon and she was wondering if he would be able to see her signal.

"She's been braggin' it over me 'cause she claims to be bohn a house-servant," Lucy went on as she busied herself with Dorothea's toilet. "An' she say you-all ain't real quality Confedrit like we-all is, so that it ain't nothin' 't all to take care o' yoh."

"Well, you just tell her," Dorothea answered,

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laughing, "that my father's cousin is a real live lord in England and see what she says to that." She chuckled to herself as she thought how little Itty would be impressed if she could see the red-faced, hard-riding old aristocrat in his mud-stained pink. But she guessed that this would give Lucy the weapon she needed to use among her fellow-workers in the quarter, and Lucy's delighted exclamations of wonder at the information confirmed this view.

"Is he a sure enough, bang-up quality lord?" Lucy demanded a little skeptically, as if the news was too good to be true.

"He is an earl," Dorothea announced impressively.

"My, oh my!" Lucy exclaimed, staring down at her young mistress in wonder. "An' yoh ain't never said nothin' 'bout it till this minute. Land sakes, but won't I tell that Itty somefin'! A Nearl! I reckon that's 'most as fine as bein' a President."

Dorothea laughed gayly.

"I think that rather depends upon the President," she answered. "But it's almost as good as a King."

Dorothea's toilet was completed in a blaze of glory, the only difficulty being that the frocks that Lucy had formerly admired became, on a sudden, scarcely magnificent enough for one who claimed so exalted a relative.

After dinner Dorothea suddenly found herself alone. Miss Imogene slipped upstairs to unpack and rest after her journey. Harriot went grumblingly away with her governess. Mrs. May returned to her spinning-room and April disappeared with Val Tracy.

"Now is my chance," Dorothea said to herself, and ran to her room to put on her hat.

Glancing out of the window, she saw April and

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Val Tracy strolling over the lawn in deep conversation. Obviously their talk was of serious interest to them both; but what Dorothea was most concerned with was the fact that their presence there cut her off from going away without being observed. She wished to slip off without the necessity of explanation as to where she was going, and should either of them see her start it would be entirely natural that they should enquire her errand. Nor was it at all improbable that Val Tracy might feel called on to accompany her if she told them she was off for a walk to Coulter Woods. She dared not run any risks, and had no wish to excite suspicion by evasive answers. So she decided to avoid questions.

"I must wait till they go away," she said to herself, and sat down to watch the two.

But it was perhaps a half hour before Val and April separated, Val going off toward the stable and April coming into the house. Dorothea heard her cousin enter her room, closing the door with almost a bang. She waited a moment and then went quietly down the stairs and so out upon her mission, satisfied in her own mind that her going had been unobserved. She had failed to note that April's door, although slammed shut, had been opened again just the slightest crack and that some one standing inside with an eye to the opening would have a complete view of all that went on in the hall.

In the few minutes that April stood watching through the crack of the door for Dorothea to leave her room, she thought over what she was about to do. For the first time since this war had begun, an opportunity had been offered her to do something for the cause. To make bandages, or scrape lint; to patch worn clothes, to make shift with this or that; all these things were nothing to one whose whole

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heart was set on the winning of the Southern cause. She was sorry for the soldiers who had to face the dangers of battle. She mourned their sufferings and grieved for the blood that must be shed. But she would have gone to the battle-front with a glad heart. She longed for an active part, and here, at last, was an opportunity. To be sure the danger was slight; but capturing this Northern spy would be no mean achievement, and would be something that she could remember with pride to the end of her days. So, when Dorothea was well on her way, April found Tracy and together they followed, just out of sight.

"You're sure you know where she's going?" Val asked. He was not quite himself. It wasn't the sort of game he was in the habit of playing and he was a little fearful of the outcome. Certainly if he seized Dorothea's lover he might expect little further consideration from her.

"There is no doubt where they will meet," April answered with assurance. "Have your pistol handy."

Val nodded, but he hoped there would not be need of a pistol. It would be useful in overpowering his prisoner, but he hoped fervently he would not have to shoot. It would be bad enough without that.

"If they are at the place I saw her last time, we can come up behind them and they'll never know till we appear," April went on. "I nearly ran them down yesterday."

They went on, keeping just out of sight and taking the precaution to reconnoiter when they turned corners. Once or twice they had a glimpse of Dorothea, flitting steadily ahead with never a glance back of her. It seemed as if she was perfectly certain

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Young Stanchfield struggled to sit up.

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that no one knew her errand, and she walked quickly as if she longed to be at the rendezvous.

April and Tracy followed in silence. They did not have much to say, both being busy with their own thoughts.

And at last they approached the spot where April had guessed the meeting was to take place. There was a steep hill with a sharp turn at the top, and they began the ascent as noiselessly as possible, stepping cautiously from spot to spot and being careful not to disturb any loose stones.

"I don't want to have to shoot the fellow," Val whispered in April's ear. "He may give us useful information and — and anyway, I'd rather not have any bloodshed if we can help it."

To this April made no reply, but after they had gone a few yards further she laid a hand on his arm.

"Listen," she said, under her breath.

They stopped and in a moment the sound of voices reached them. First a man's and then the low voice of a girl, which they guessed to be Dorothea's, although only a murmur was audible.

"They have met," April whispered, her eyes ablaze with excitement. "Come on." She tugged at Val's sleeve to urge him forward.

"Take your time," he cautioned. "Faith, I've seen many a bird missed by shooting too quick."

Cautiously they went forward till they came to the corner of the path and again paused. Once around the bend there would be no time for reconsideration. The action would be immediate. Tracy's heart grew heavier as the moment approached when he would be forced to face Dorothea in the guise of an enemy. The voices were now more audible and he caught the words "good-by."

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There was no time to lose.

"Come on." It was he who urged now, pulling his pistol from its holster, and with a rush the two broke from their hiding-place into the open.

Facing them stood Dorothea, her eyes wide with apprehension and surprise; but both Tracy and April were staring at the back of a man in the hated Yankee uniform, and for an instant there was a complete silence. Then Tracy, leveling his pistol at the man's back, spoke sternly.

"Throw up your hands! You are my prisoner, and if you move I'll shoot you without mercy."

Dorothea, aghast, turned her eyes upon the man before her, and he, startled out of all reason, did not see that she was as much amazed at this development as he.

"So, you have betrayed me," he whispered.

April, with a half smile of triumph on her lips, looked scornfully at her silent cousin.

"We are sorry to disturb you, Dorothea," she said, "but we shall have to deprive you of your spy."

At her words the man whirled and she confronted Lee Hendon, his face pale and drawn with the anguish of this unexpected meeting.

At sight of him April's eyes grew round, and for a moment there was no sound as the two gazed at each other.

"Lee! It is Lee!" April murmured, scarcely knowing what she said, then on a sudden she took a step forward and threw herself between the two men.

"Run!" she cried, "Run!" and grasped Val Tracy by the arm that held the pistol.

At this sudden change in the situation Val stood motionless, stunned for the moment at so unexpected a turn of events.

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"Let go my arm, April," he cried. "I shan't let him run away if I can help it. Let go."

But the girl held on, keeping herself between Tracy and her lover.

"Run, Lee, I beg you to run!" she cried again and again, and at length Hendon, seeming to come to his senses, took a step toward her, then changed his mind and plunged into the undergrowth at the side of the path.

"Let me go, April," cried Tracy, struggling. "He will ruin our plans. I cannot let him off. Please, April."

He struggled as well as he could without hurting her, but the girl, mad with terror at the possible fate she had brought on Lee, clung tightly, and in a little Tracy ceased to struggle and they stood thus till all sound of Lee's flight died away. Then April loosed her hold and, dropping to a fallen log, hid her face in her hands and sobbed.

Tracy looked down at her for a moment, then turned his gaze upon Dorothea. He saw a white countenance lifted to his, but he might have read the truth in the clear eyes that met his frankly and fearlessly.

"Faith, and it takes a pair of women to make a fool of a man," he blurted out. "I wish you joy of your spies and traitors, Miss Dorothea Drummond." And with that he turned on his heel and quitted the place.

Dorothea flushed at Tracy's words, but she had none with which to answer him. From the moment she saw him and April come around the turn in the path she was too amazed even to think. That they had been following her and were aware of her errand was quite apparent, but how they had become aware of it she could not guess.

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Now her brain began to clear and she excused Hendon's suspicion, realizing how entirely possible it was for him to think she had betrayed him. Yes, that was natural enough, and she was sorry. But what had Tracy in his mind? She had done nothing that would give him an excuse for saying that she was playing the part of spy or traitor. To be sure he had seen her with Larry Stanchfield and now with Lee Hendon, both in blue uniforms, but he was assuming too much without giving her a chance to set herself right. As far as Hendon was concerned, she could explain that to him when the opportunity arose. That is, if he asked her to. Time would attend to that, and in the meanwhile there was April, sobbing as if her heart would break.

And Dorothea was perplexed about this also. She had been so sure that Lee was in touch with April and — It was perfectly plain that her cousin had no idea who the man was she had brought Val Tracy to capture, for the moment she saw it was Lee she straightway set about saving him.

But then, why should April be crying as if her heart would break?

"Perhaps I'm wrong after all," Dorothea said to herself, but whatever the reason she could not stand by and see her cousin breaking her heart without a word of sympathy.

Quickly she went to April and put an arm about her. But April sprang to her feet and turned an angry, tear-stained face.

"Don't touch me!" she cried passionately. "Don't touch me. You are an ungrateful Yankee and you have been spying on us all the time you have been here!"

"That is not true," Dorothea began, but April cut her short.

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" Don't attempt to deny it," she exclaimed, " when you wear the proof of it! " and she pointed to the red velvet band on Dorothea's wrist.

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CHAPTER XXV

EXPLANATIONS

WITHOUT another word April quitted the place and Dorothea stood alone in the woods, stunned by the sudden turn of events. Lee Hendon had accused her of betraying him; Val Tracy, for whose opinion she cared more than for all the rest, had taken for granted that she had been acting dishonorably; and April had openly said she was a Red String. She realized fully that, in the circumstances, all of their suspicions seemed fully justified. So far as Val was concerned this was the second time he had found her in communication with one of his enemies.

"But he might have asked me for an explanation," she murmured half aloud. That was the thought that hurt her most. All three had condemned her without giving her an opportunity to defend herself. What Lee Hendon might think she did not care in the slightest. So far as he was concerned, her task had been performed for Hal's sake alone and there her interest in the matter ceased. April she could forgive, understanding how her cousin, drawn between her love for her country and the affection for the man who wore the uniform of its enemies, had been so distraught that she scarcely knew what she was saying. But none of these excuses would serve to justify Val Tracy's attitude toward her. She was angry with him, feeling that he

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had not been fair, that he had been too ready to jump to conclusions and condemn her without a word.

Slowly she made her way to the May home, pondering in her mind what was ahead of her. It seemed no longer endurable for her to remain with her aunt, while the increased difficulties of travel made it well-nigh impossible to go North. And even there she would not find a home. Her father was in England and her last letter from him gave no hint that he could come to America again in the immediate future. It would take a long time to communicate with him, and she felt it would be intolerable to stay in Washington while her cousin looked upon her as an enemy.

Then she remembered Miss Imogene with a feeling of relief. That dainty little lady would find some solution of her difficulties, she felt sure, and would, if necessary, go away with her until her father made arrangements for her to join him.

As she walked up the drive to the house Harriot came running down to meet her.

"Where have you been?" was the first question, and then without pausing for a reply, "Val Tracy has gone! Went off and hardly said good-by — and April's up in her room with the door locked. What do you think is the matter?"

Evidently Harriot had seen enough to excite her curiosity, but as yet she did not connect Dorothea with the disturbance in any way.

"I suppose Captain Tracy has had orders," Dorothea answered evasively.

"I don't think so," Harriot confided in an undertone. "I think he and April have had a tiff; and that's funny, too; because of course I believed she was in love with Lee Hendon. Didn't you?"

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"Yes, indeed," Dorothea replied enthusiastically, glad of one question she need not evade.

"Well, you can't tell," Harriot went on judicially. "When they get in love there's no counting on what they'll do, no matter who it is they're in love with."

She chattered on, enlarging on her views of that fatal malady, love, quite unmindful of the fact that Dorothea added little to the conversation. She was aware of a certain satisfaction in the fact that Harriot was wrong in her surmises. She knew that April was not in love with Val Tracy, but this did not by any means insure that Val was as indifferent to April.

She managed to escape after a time and went directly to her room. She wanted to think before she talked to Miss Imogene about the afternoon's adventure. There were many things to consider, and not the least of these was how far she might go in discussing April's affairs. It gave her no right, as Dorothea saw it, to betray a confidence simply because her cousin had put a wrong interpretation upon her actions. She had done her best to keep the knowledge that Lee Hendon wore a blue uniform to herself. That had plainly been Hal's wish, and now that two others knew of it she saw no very good reason why she should tell a third. But, on the other hand, how could she explain her position without recounting the facts of the case? She wanted advice, for she felt the time had come when she could no longer stay at her aunt's, yet she doubted her right to openly explain the matter upon which she sought guidance.

Why Tracy had gone away she could not guess, unless it was that he did not wish to be near April now that he was assured of her love for Lee Hendon. That must have been quite plain to him, for the agony

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in April's voice when she shouted to Hendon to run, left no doubt about the state of her feelings toward him. Dorothea concluded that here was the most reasonable explanation for Val's sudden departure, and she sighed.

On top of this conclusion, she realized suddenly that unless some better excuse than she could then think of for going away was forthcoming she would be obliged to make an explanation to her Aunt Parthenia. It was impossible for her to say, indifferently, that she had decided to go back to England. Mrs. May would never be satisfied with that, and would doubtless forbid her to stir until she had heard directly from her father. But the same scruples that kept her from talking to Miss Imogene were equally effective with her aunt. The matter so closely concerned April that the more Dorothea thought of it the less she felt inclined to discuss it.

"I must wait," she concluded finally, "and if I have a chance I shall speak to April."

This definite decision taken, she was forced to act as if nothing had happened, but determined, at the first opportunity that presented itself, to talk openly to her cousin and so put an end to a situation she felt to be intolerable.

But this opportunity failed to come at once. That night at supper April appeared as usual, indeed Dorothea could note no change in her manner; all traces of tears were gone and she seemed her bright vivacious self. There was some talk of Tracy's sudden departure, but April gave no hint that she was aware of any reason for it, and to those who knew nothing of the afternoon's occurrences it was easy to account for it as due to the exigencies of the war. Toward Dorothea she showed no change, so far as the girl could see, and this confirmed her

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conclusion that April wished the matter kept secret. Otherwise she would have spoken out, at least to her mother, and Dorothea was sure that her Aunt Parthenia would not be one to let her rest under any suspicion without giving her a chance to explain the circumstances.

There was just one person who could set the matter straight in the main, at least; and he was lying in bed sorely wounded. Dorothea could not take her grievances to him while he was in this condition, but when Hal had sufficiently recovered to be down on the gallery in the sun Dorothea made up her mind that she would speak to him some day when they were alone together and see that he informed April of the exact circumstances of her meeting with Lee Hendon.

Strangely enough April had come to the same conclusion from an entirely different standpoint. She thoroughly believed in Dorothea's guilt. There was no doubt in her mind that her accusation had been just and that her cousin was a Red String. To her thinking, the English girl had taken advantage of her relationship with them to come South and spy upon the Confederacy. She was not quite logical even with herself; but although suspicion had more than once entered her mind, it was only when she believed herself thoroughly justified that she permitted these vague doubts to take a definite form. Now that she had seen Dorothea in communication with Lee Hendon she had found the necessary proof for her intuitive distrust, and there was nothing she could not have believed Dorothea capable of to further the cause of the Yankees. She thought it entirely possible that the girl had been in constant communication with Hendon, supplying him with information she had picked up from Hal and Val Tracy

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or the many officers who had stayed with them from time to time.

Her first intention was to go to her mother and tell her flatly that Dorothea could no longer stay there. But, upon thinking it over, she saw the weakness of her position with Mrs. May. If the spy had been any one but Lee Hendon there would have been no hesitation; but here was the man she loved deeply involved — and she had saved him from capture! That act she excused to herself, and perhaps here lay an added reason for her bitterness toward Dorothea. Also her mother, frankly lukewarm toward the Southern cause, would be ready enough to defend Dorothea to the last; but the argument that had most weight in her thoughts was that here was a matter that concerned primarily the head of the house. Her father should be the one to determine what should be done in such a case; for, in a measure, she conceived the honor of family to be at stake; but Colonel May was quite inaccessible, so naturally she concluded that Hal must take their father's place.

But, like Dorothea, she had no wish to burden Hal until he was convalescent. She counted upon the fact that Dorothea would do nothing until she was forced to, attributing the most obvious motives to her, convinced that she would remain in Washington as long as she could in the hope of gaining further information that would be useful to the Northern armies. But she felt herself a match for her cousin, who, she had the satisfaction of knowing, never left the place unobserved.

At last April determined that Hal was well enough to hear her story and, with a sense of fairness, she determined that Dorothea should be present. With that in view she ascertained that, save for Big Jim, Hal was alone on the piazza and went upstairs to

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fetch Dorothea. On her way up, however, she met her cousin coming down.

"I was just coming up for you," April remarked. "I want you to come out and see Hal."

"I was just going to see him," Dorothea replied calmly, and together the two went out on the porch.

"I'm in luck to-day," Hal cried as the two sat down, one on either side of him. "Two such lovely females all to myself is an unexpected pleasure," and he smiled at Dorothea; but, receiving no answering smile, he looked from one to the other, sensing a seriousness in their visit that puzzled him.

"Big Jim," April said to the boy, "you may go to the Quarters till you're sent for." And with a grin the colored lad went off.

"What's up?" asked Hal. "You look as if there was more bad news."

"No, Hal, it isn't that," April responded quickly, "but it isn't cheerful news, either. I have a very disagreeable task to perform, but it must be done. Our cousin Dorothea is one of this band of Red Strings!"

She made the announcement as calmly as she could, but there was the light of excited indignation in her eyes and she could not keep a trace of scorn out of her tone.

Hal turned toward Dorothea with a questioning glance. Certain things had happened that had led him to the suspicion that there might be some one about the place who was not entirely loyal, but he had never seen anything to make him positive of it. Instantly all these past suspicions flashed over him.

"It can't be *you,* Dorothea!" he exclaimed incredulously.

"Did you think there was a spy about here, Hal?"

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April cried, seizing upon the implication his question suggested.

"Yes," Hal answered, with growing resentment. "Ever since that night they came looking for that escaped prisoner from Andersonville. I was never satisfied about that. The men were certain the dogs tracked him to this house. It was here the trail stopped."

"And Dorothea was out alone on the porch that night," April cut in. "Isn't that true?" she demanded, turning to the girl.

"Yes, it is," Dorothea answered. "But so were you, for that matter. That doesn't prove I'm a Red String, any more than that you are. You don't have to go back that far, April. Tell Hal what happened lately. That's what I was going to tell him." Of the three Dorothea was now the calmest.

Hal turned an inquiring glance toward his sister.

"What happened?" he questioned.

"Dorothea met a Union officer in Coulter Woods!" April announced it with an air of finality. She had no wish to volunteer information about who that officer was, although she had no hope that her cousin would keep the matter secret.

"Is that true, too?" asked Hal.

"Yes," Dorothea nodded, and she could not help smiling a little.

"It is no matter to laugh about!" April burst out passionately. "Hal, we have been betrayed. It is not only that she has met this man, but she had information to put at naught plans we had for a fine stroke. Val Tracy was there, too. He knows — and there's no telling how much it might have done for the Cause."

She would have gone on but at the moment a

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clatter of horse's hoofs galloping up the drive drew the attention of all, and they saw Val Tracy racing toward the house. A few minutes later he flung himself in a chair beside them.

"Faith, this is a fine little gathering!" he exclaimed irritably. "We have been betrayed, April. The enemy has been informed. I'll leave you to say for yourself whose fault it was."

"How do you know?" April demanded.

"I have been after the man since last I saw you," Val went on. "I've had the whole countryside looking for him — but without result. And now I get this." He fumbled in his tunic and drew out a yellow dispatch, which he proceeded to read: "'Plans betrayed by Union officer traced from Washington.' There you are! Can anything be plainer?"

April turned white and wrung her hands.

"What's this all about, Val?" demanded Hal. "We're having all sorts of accusations and what not, but I don't know what you're all driving at."

"It's quickly told," Tracy answered. "We planned to recapture Savannah. It was a secret. There weren't half a dozen knew of it. Well, it seems that in some way Dorothea learned it, and we saw her talking to a Union officer in the woods. Our plans were betrayed. I'll leave you to put two and two together."

There was a momentary hush and then Hal turned to Dorothea.

"Haven't you anything to say in your own defense?" he asked.

"I have only been accused of meeting a Union officer in the woods," she replied gravely enough now. "I cannot deny that. I did meet him. Twice."

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" Dorothea met a Union officer in Coulter woods."

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"Did you tell him of these plans?" Hal asked. There was something about Dorothea's straightforward look that gave him confidence in her word.

"No," Dorothea answered promptly.

"You must have!" April burst out. "Who else could have told him? You don't deny that you knew of them?"

For the first time Dorothea hesitated. She did know of them from Larry Stanchfield; but she was reluctant to admit it, seeing the obvious inference that would be drawn. On the other hand she was in no mood to tell anything but the truth.

"Yes, I did know of them," she replied.

"And you expect us to believe you did not tell this man you met in the woods?" Hal said, sternly.

"Of course I expect you to believe me," Dorothea answered, a blaze of anger coming into her eyes. "That is exactly what I do expect you to do."

"But who else could have told the man?" Hal went on. "No one but you and Val, apparently, knew of it and we have been betrayed. You can't expect me to think Val betrayed himself."

"There was one other who knew," Tracy cut in, sharply. "I told April, like a fool!"

"Do you think I would have told?" April demanded with blazing eyes. "I would have died first."

"April is loyal to the core!" Hal defended his sister.

"I don't think she would tell," Tracy agreed, "but I don't think Dorothea would either."

"Thank you, Val," Dorothea said, softly. She did not care what the others thought at that moment.

"But what other motive could she have had for meeting him?" April persisted.

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"To help the man, if she's the Red String you say she is," Hal put in quickly. "Did you go to help him, Dorothea?" he questioned her directly.

"Yes, that's just what I did," she answered, "but I am not a Red String any more than I am a traitor!"

April shrugged her shoulders. It was so entirely evident that she was, or had been, in communication with their enemies that it seemed as if Dorothea could not be telling the truth. She had admitted knowledge of an undertaking so secret that but a few knew of it. And now it had failed, and everything pointed to Dorothea as the one responsible for the failure. As to Lee Hendon, he was, apparently, now an avowed enemy and, as such, even she could not take exception to his action.

"There's just one thing I don't understand," Hal broke in upon April's thoughts. "How does it come that you and Tracy know all about this meeting of Dorothea's?"

"We saw them together," April answered, not realizing where this was leading.

"Then why did you let the man get away?" demanded Hal, turning to Val.

"You will have to ask your sister that," Tracy replied.

Hal turned to April with an inquiring glance and the girl saw that she must make some explanation.

"The man was Lee Hendon, Hal," she replied in a low voice.

"Lee Hendon!" exclaimed Hal, suddenly enlightened. "Lee Hendon! And you saw him?"

"Yes, I saw him with Dorothea," April broke out. "I followed her, not knowing who the man was she went to meet, and we have not yet had any satisfactory answer as to why Dorothea did meet him. That

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we must have, if she is to stay any longer in this house."

"I can give you that, April," Hal answered quietly. "Dorothea met Lee Hendon at my request."

"At your request!" April repeated in astonishment.

"Yes," Hal went on. "Lee Hendon saved my life, no matter what uniform he was wearing, and I was in his debt for that. Dorothea undertook to discharge that debt. I think we all owe her an apology."

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CHAPTER XXVI

MR. DAVIS MAKES A SPEECH

HAL'S announcement came like a bursting bombshell to April and Val Tracy. The latter half turned away.

"I'm an idiot!" he exclaimed to no one in particular.

"There is no need for anybody to apologize," Dorothea protested earnestly. "I've understood it all along. Of course you thought I was giving information to Mr. Hendon. I should have thought the same; but I hoped it would all be explained as soon as Hal was well. I didn't want to bother him about it at first, and I wasn't sure he wanted me to talk about it. That's why I didn't tell you in the beginning."

Hal told the story of how Hendon had brought him back and in a little while every one was apparently satisfied. April said she was sorry, and Dorothea forgave her promptly; but there was still a hint of reservation in April's manner. There were other things that were not clear to her. She was by no means satisfied that Dorothea was free from all the blame. There were still matters that required clearing up, but she was not the sort of a girl to defend herself by stating vague suspicions and, though there was no very great warmth in her words to Dorothea, they were a confession of her fault and were as gracious as she could make them.

And Dorothea had no wish to appear triumphant.

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The only grievance she had was that it had been taken for granted that no excuse was possible and that appearances should determine the matter so completely. But this she was willing to forget. She was glad that the misunderstanding was ended, and although she realized that April had yet to be won completely, she hoped in time to accomplish that also.

After supper that night Val Tracy sought her out, and for a few moments they were alone on the lawn.

"I don't deserve to have you speak to me," he told her. "And I'm not one to make excuses, but, faith! I was a bit upset."

"Of course you were," she answered readily with a smile. "It was very upsetting all 'round. I was so surprised when you came rushing up that I couldn't say a word."

"And I had to let the fellow off, knowing all the time what was depending upon it," he answered. "I'll be glad when this pesky war is over — and it won't be very long now or I'm greatly mistaken."

"And the South will lose?" Dorothea half questioned.

Tracy shook his head affirmatively.

"It has lost!" he admitted. "Not that I would say that to any one but you."

"I'm glad," Dorothea said, impulsively. "And I shouldn't say that to any one but you!" she added with a low laugh.

He smiled in answer, but his face went grave in a moment.

"So you're against us, after all," he remarked.

"No, that isn't quite it, either," Dorothea tried to explain. "I'm not against anybody. At least not as I see it now. Mr. Lincoln, you know, started me thinking long ago. But, since I've been here, it

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seems as if it was only the South that was against things — and they don't understand. It is when the war is over that they will see how mistaken they have been. Then they'll find that Mr. Lincoln is their best friend. You know, Captain Tracy," she went on, lowering her voice a little, " Mr. Lincoln would be a friend to anybody who gave him a chance."

" You seem a great admirer of his," Tracy said shortly.

" And so would you be, if you knew him," she replied promptly.

" Maybe," he replied, " and, sure, you'd be the one to convince me. But I'm not hiding the fact that I don't like to be fighting on the losing side. If it hadn't been for Hendon we might have pulled through after all."

" Do you mean you think he gave the information to the Yankees about your plan? " she asked.

" Of course I do," he replied. " Who else was there? "

" Well, it wasn't Mr. Hendon," Dorothea returned positively. " He didn't know about it. How could he have known if I didn't tell him? And I didn't."

" Faith, that's the truth," Tracy admitted with a shake of his head. " I had it so firmly in my mind that he was a traitor that I forgot to put two and two together. Are you sure, though? "

" Of course I can't be absolutely positive," Dorothea explained. " But I can assure you he didn't learn of it from me, and —" she hesitated a moment, " and I have seen a man who did know of it."

He looked at her a moment closely, then shook his head slowly.

" It's not for me to doubt what you say or to ask questions," he began; but she interrupted.

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"One thing I should like you to understand," she said. "I had no hand in it, either directly or indirectly. It was all an accident, my finding out. Please believe that I wouldn't stay here in this house and abuse its hospitality."

Tracy could have no doubt of Dorothea's sincerity, so earnestly did she speak. "I wish I'd known that a bit sooner," he remarked soberly.

"Would it have made any difference?" Dorothea questioned.

"It may make a difference to Hendon," Tracy replied. "To tell you the truth," he went on, "for another reason we suspected Hendon hadn't brought the news to the Yanks. We didn't see how he could have gotten through to them."

"What do you mean by that?" Dorothea asked.

"When I left here after that little play we had in the woods yonder," Tracy explained, "I went out to alarm the country. It was too serious a matter, you understand, to let the whims of a girl thwart us. I couldn't fight with April over taking the man then and there; but — well, at any rate, in an hour there was a party looking for Hendon and I went on to give the warning as wide a range as I could. I guessed Hendon knew from you. April overheard you talking to Miss Imogene. I was sure what he was after and I cut off his road to the Yankees."

"Then he was captured?" Dorothea demanded.

"Not that I've heard of," Val acknowledged. "I've even been thinking he might have gotten through, seeing that the Yanks were warned; but now —" He whistled softly to himself. "They may get him yet — and if they do —"

"What will they do?" Dorothea's tone was anxious.

Tracy shrugged his shoulders.

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"The man is a Southerner turned Yankee. You can guess the rest," he answered shortly.

"But they can't do anything more than take him prisoner!" Dorothea exclaimed. She had no special interest in Lee Hendon save for April's sake, but Tracy's tone was suggestive of something serious.

"I wish I could be sure of that," Tracy replied gravely. "You see, they are an irregular band of militia and will have small regard for the law in such cases. They will consider him not only a spy but a traitor." He shook his head dubiously. "We mustn't speak of this to April."

"But we must do something," Dorothea insisted.

"Yes, but I don't know what has become of him," Tracy explained. "He may be all right, after all, you know. At any rate I shall make it my business to find out. But, under any circumstances, April must not know."

Secrecy, they agreed, was necessary, and that same evening Tracy went off again to try to find some trace of Hendon.

The next day the news reached little Washington that President Lincoln had been assassinated. There were few details and for some little time no one knew positively who the murderer was, and there were many fantastic rumors flying about.

Upon Dorothea the sad event made a deep impression, deeper than even she realized at the time. Once more she brought back to her mind the scene in which the great and kindly man had shown her his heart for a moment, and his death seemed a personal loss to her.

But out of the sadness came a crystallizing of all the vague feelings that had struggled for expression almost from the very day she had arrived in the South. She felt now that her real sympathy had

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always been for the North and that she was glad that they had won. Not that she lacked sympathy and understanding for her rebel relatives. She had no preconceived prejudices to warp her judgment, but great principles had been involved in this war that was now practically ended, and Dorothea knew that they had been upheld by the North under the leadership of Mr. Lincoln.

Indeed there was no rejoicing in the May household over the fact that the man who had beaten the Confederacy was dead. Mrs. May said openly and with truth that the South had lost her best friend. Even April expressed her indignation.

"We are not murderers!" she exclaimed, and Dorothea was glad that her cousins, with all their strong Southern loyalty, had no excuses for so cowardly a deed.

The days that followed brought a realizing sense to even the most hopeful Confederate that the war was over and that the South had lost; but Jefferson Davis still clung to the shadow of his position, and, though he was in flight from Virginia, there was talk of a new government being instituted in Texas, to which state he was then trying to make his way.

During these days Dorothea waited anxiously for the return of Val Tracy. Lee Hendon's actions were not quite clear to her and although she was glad the Union had won she could not hide from herself that this young man's course did not always stir her admiration. Nevertheless she realized that he was in a perilous position and would have been glad to know he was safe.

And then, in an unusual flutter even for them, Mrs. Stewart and Corinne arrived one Sunday with a momentous announcement.

"Our dear President Davis is in Washington!"

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the elder lady cried as she met each of the family in turn. "He has honored our town as it has never been honored before in all history, except when Washington, the first Rebel president, visited it."

Dorothea was surprised to find that even April greeted this news with little enthusiasm. She had had hints from time to time that her relations were not always in sympathy with Mr. Davis and upon one occasion she had overheard Hal say, rather bitterly, "Our President is nothing but a politician!" But she was rather surprised at their indifference to his arrival in Washington.

She, on the other hand, had a distinct curiosity to see this man who had been so prominent a figure during the four terrible years through which the United States had just passed, and when she learned from Mrs. Stewart that a reception was to be held in Mr. Davis's honor that afternoon she did not conceal her desire to go.

"I'll go with you," Harriot announced. "They always have something to eat at receptions." But none of the others in the family gave any indication that they were even mildly interested and shortly Mrs. Stewart went away, expressing pointedly her opinion that the whole May family were half Yankees, after all.

Harriot and Dorothea went to the reception and found the place crowded with fulsome admirers of Mr. Davis, prominent among whom was Mrs. Stewart, who seemed to hang upon the great man's words as if an oracle spoke. The two girls viewed this from a distance, and it was not until Mr. Davis consented to make a little speech and stood upon a chair that Dorothea really had a good view of him.

He was a tall, aristocratic-looking man with blue

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eyes, but with the refinement of feature there was also a hint of vanity and weakness. Yet to Dorothea there was something that suggested that real President she had seen in the other Washington. What it was she could not have said, but there was a resemblance that brought a pang to her heart and a wonder that these two antagonists in so great a struggle should resemble each other even in the slightest degree. In character they were as wide apart as the poles.

Dorothea listened to the speech Mr. Davis made with only half an ear, until suddenly she became aware that he was saying something that interested her vitally.

"Our Sacred Cause is not dead," Mr. Davis insisted, with the round, ringing tones of the political orator. "Our beloved South has sent her sons from every corner of its fertile lands. Even here in little Washington I could tell you a tale of bravery unsurpassed in the annals of history. The young man of whom I speak has asked that his secret be kept, but I cannot resist the temptation to tell you. This native son, this youth who has grown up among you, was forced by circumstances to stay at home during the early years of the war; but there came a time when he was free, and he journeyed to us, begging for the most dangerous mission upon which he could embark. From the beginning his heart was in our great Cause and because he could not do his utmost at the start he wished a doubly hazardous part to play. I tell you, ladies and gentlemen of Washington, that this gentleman donned the uniform of a Union officer and went into our implacable enemies' lines and from there sent us information of inestimable value. Every moment he was risking his life —

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at any hour he might have paid the penalty for his bravery by a disgraceful death. Indeed I do not know to-day whether he is alive or dead. He may have found a martyr's grave for the sake of our dear Confederacy, and that is one reason why I am telling you, his friends, this story. Have you not guessed of whom I speak? It is of Lee Hendon, whose name, bequeathed to him by honored —"

At this point Dorothea lost track of what Mr. Davis was saying. In a flash everything was clear to her and a great impulse to run to April with this news brought her to her feet and, without a thought of Harriot, she left the building and started for home, half running.

In her thoughts was but one object: to tell April that her lover was an honorable man; there was no room in her mind for anything else as she hurried to the house.

At the front door she met Merry.

"Where is Miss April?" she demanded.

"Land sakes, Miss Dee!" exclaimed Merry, her eyes opening wide with surprise. "You sure is in a hurry. Lil' Miss, she's upstaihs in her room, I reckon."

Dorothea did not wait to explain, but climbing the stairs, two steps at a time, she went directly to April's room and, without the formality of knocking, burst open the door and rushed in.

April, sitting by her desk, glanced up, a look of annoyance coming into her face; but this changed on the instant at her cousin's words.

"Oh, April!" cried Dorothea, with a sob in her voice, "he isn't a traitor after all. He's been a Confederate spy all the time, and —"

"Who are you talking about?" demanded April, now on her feet, a bright light of happiness coming

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into her eyes as she guessed at the meaning of this abrupt announcement. "Who is it, Dorothea?"

"Why, Lee Hendon, of course!" came the happy answer.

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CHAPTER XXVII

A RACE AGAINST DEATH

IT was inevitable that sooner or later April and Dorothea should understand each other and be free to express the warm feeling each had in her heart for the other. And here was the incident that was to break down all barriers of misunderstanding. April realized that Dorothea, with a quick sympathy, had hurried to her with the news that would be more welcome than any other. For an instant they looked deep into each other's eyes and then April took her cousin in her arms and hugged her close.

"And so it was poor Lee you saw at the window that night," April said an hour or so later. "I didn't know he was there."

"And I thought you had gone out to meet him," Dorothea explained.

"Oh, no," exclaimed April with a blush. "If I'd known he was there I shouldn't have gone. I was such a stubborn, stupid girl. No, I didn't go to meet him, but, you know, Dee, it was an anniversary, that night, the anniversary of the day Lee asked me to marry him. I didn't forget that, you know, and — and — well, I couldn't stand it any more. I had to get away by myself for a minute or two and I didn't want any one to know. And Lee remembered too. I wish I could see him and ask him to forgive me."

And then for the first time Dorothea recollected that Lee Hendon might be in peril of his life at that moment. In the excitement of discovering the real

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truth about him she had forgotten what Tracy had told her, and her heart held a sudden pang of anxiety.

"April," she said, gently, "I think I ought to tell you that Mr. Hendon may be a prisoner."

"With the Yankees?" April demanded with a sudden whitening of her face.

"No, with some one of the Confederate bands," Dorothea answered, and then told her cousin all that Tracy feared.

"But all Lee would have to do is to say what he had been doing," April insisted. "If he told his captors that he was really a Southern spy, although he wore a blue uniform —" She broke off suddenly, realizing that her words did not ring true. She herself would be very skeptical of a man who had apparently shown no enthusiasm for the Confederacy and later had been taken in the garb of its enemies.

"Dorothea," she cried, her eyes widening with apprehension, "did Val believe there was any danger?"

"Yes," Dorothea answered, thinking no good would come of hiding anything. "He was afraid Mr. Hendon might have been captured by men who would take the law into their own hands."

April jumped to her feet with a sharp cry.

"But they mustn't have their own way!" she exclaimed. "Something must be done at once. Where did Val say Lee was?"

"He didn't know," Dorothea answered. "He went out to look for him. You see, he put the men on Mr. Hendon's trail, fancying he was a Union spy who was trying to warn the Federal soldiers in Savannah. When I saw Captain Tracy last he didn't know that Mr. Hendon had been captured, though

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he thought it likely. I don't know where either of them are now."

"But there must be something we can do," April insisted. "We can't sit here and just wait. They may kill Lee. Oh, Dorothea," she sobbed, "it was I that set Val Tracy after Lee. If I hadn't been so suspicious of you, he would have been out of harm's way now. Oh, what shall I do if anything happens to Lee?"

She sank down in a chair, sobbing as if her heart would break and Dorothea, her own eyes wet with sympathetic tears, tried to comfort her, knowing all the while how inadequate were words to lighten such anxiety.

But April was not one of those girls who do nothing but cry when misfortune overtakes them. In a very few minutes she dried her tears and became her brave, resolute self.

"Dorothea, there must be something we can do," she said emphatically. "Didn't Val give you a hint of where he might be going?"

Dorothea shook her head.

"He had no idea himself, April," she replied. "Captain Tracy had roused the whole country, hoping to capture Mr. Hendon before he could get through to Savannah."

She would have gone on but, on answering a knock at the door, they found Lucy.

"Please, Miss Dee," began the colored maid, "there's a boy down stairs wantin' mighty bad to see you-all."

"To see me?" Dorothea questioned, not knowing who it could possibly be. "What kind of a boy, Lucy?"

"Oh, jes' one of 'em ordinary boys, Miss," answered the girl as if she were giving an entirely

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adequate description. "I reckon he's come some ways, seein' he's ridin' a poor, skin-and-bones mule."

Together the girls went down and found a farmer's boy, twelve years old or so, who, in answer to their questions, silently produced a folded sheet of paper with Dorothea's name written on the outside.

Quickly she opened it, glanced at the signature and saw that it was from Val Tracy; then she read as follows:

"I have found Hendon. He is in the hands of a band of Irregulars who insist upon executing him as a spy. I have done everything I can, but it is of no use. They won't let me even see him, but have brought me a message from him. He wants to see April before he dies, and the men have given us twenty-four hours. That means sunset to-morrow. I don't know whether she will consent to come, but the least I could do was to make this effort to get her. I should, perhaps, have gone to her myself, but it would seem like abandoning Hendon and I am still trying to persuade these men that, although he is an enemy, they have no right to kill him. Somehow I feel dreadfully sorry for Hendon, but I am afraid he is doomed. If you can persuade April to come, the boy who bears this will show her the way. I shall see you as soon as this dreadful business is over. Yours faithfully, Val Tracy."

Dorothea read the letter through rapidly, then, handing it to April, who stood beside her, she addressed the boy.

"When did you get this letter from Captain Tracy?" she demanded in a businesslike tone.

The boy was visibly embarrassed and hung his head.

"I done brung it as fast as I could, considerin';" he mumbled.

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"But when did you get it?" Dorothea repeated impatiently.

"Las' night," he answered sullenly; "but I didn't see no call to go ridin' in the dark. 'Sides, some o' them swamps is ha'nted!"

"How far did you ride?" April asked. She had read Val Tracy's letter and realized the well-nigh hopeless situation in which her lover stood; but she wasted no time in tears or vain repinings. There blazed in her brilliant eyes a look of determination that meant action.

"How far did you ride?" she questioned again impatiently.

"I reckon it'd be a matter of thirty-five miles or so," the boy answered reluctantly. "I come as fast as I could and left home long before daylight — long before; but them swamps is ha'nted —"

"Dorothea," April broke in upon the boy's excuses, "Val expected us to get this message hours ago. We shall have to start at once and perhaps, even then, we'll be too late. Will you help me?"

"Of course," answered Dorothea promptly.

"Then if you'll have Uncle Jastrow put the best pair of horses in the light carriage and tell him to come to the Heath House at once, with the boy, I shall go with him to save Lee."

She was moving as she spoke. Inside she found a hat and glanced at the tall clock in the hall. "I shall only have five hours before sunset." She paused a moment and put her hand to her heart as if there were a sharp pain there. "Thirty-five miles in five hours," she murmured under her breath. "I must do it. I must do it!" she cried loudly.

"We will do it!" Dorothea exclaimed.

By this time April was out again and starting down the drive.

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"I am going to President Davis to get an order from him for Lee's release. Send Jastrow there for me and you explain to mother. Good-by." And April hurried away.

Dorothea, as ready to act as her beautiful cousin, went to the abashed boy and grasping him by the shoulder led him into the house where she handed him over to Aunt Decent to be fed. At the same time she sent word to Uncle Jastrow. Then she sought her Aunt Parthenia.

It took but a moment or two to explain the situation and immediately Mrs. May, grown used to meeting sudden emergencies, got to work to further the expedition with all speed.

While Uncle Jastrow was being informed of what was before him, Harriot saw to having a lunch prepared and in a surprisingly short time all was ready.

Dorothea meanwhile had gotten some warm wraps for April, and she came down from her room dressed for the journey.

Mrs. May seeing her preparations and realizing Dorothea's intentions, kissed her lovingly.

"I was going with April but I shall feel that she is safe with you, dear."

A little later the traveling carriage driven by Uncle Jastrow, with the boy beside him on the box, stopped in front of the Heath House and April came running to meet them.

At sight of Dorothea she paused a moment.

"I didn't think of your coming," April murmured as she jumped in and settled down beside her cousin.

"Of course I meant to go with you all the time," said Dorothea in a matter-of-fact tone, and April kissed her, tears too near for speech.

. . . . . .

Under constant urging from April, Uncle Jastrow

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had driven the horses at as fast a gait as they could go. But the shadows were lengthening and there were still untraveled miles ahead of them. During the long hours the girls had scarcely spoken to each other, but much of the time had sat, hand in hand, looking at the ribbon of road ahead of them as the horses galloped mile after mile. Under the most favorable circumstances the task set would have been a hard one, but there was a determination behind April's quiet manner that meant a battle against any force that might attempt to hold her back.

"Faster, Uncle Jastrow!" she said, in a steady voice.

"'Deed, Lil' Miss," the old darky answered, "they's doin' all they can, 'less yoh want 'em dyin' on the road."

"Faster!" was all the reply April made, and the driver, with a shake of his white head, urged on the tiring beasts.

They watched the shadows growing longer and longer. It was a race, with everything against the weary horses reaching their destination before the descending sun gave the signal for the death of April's lover.

"Faster, Uncle Jastrow!"

The words were becoming more and more frequent, and April, sitting straight and tense, gazed ahead with burning eyes.

Through woods and swamps; past fields of green grain, over small bridges that rattled as they sped by; up hill and down they hastened on under the direction of the boy who pointed out the turnings. Dorothea had tried not to consider the possibility of being too late; but now she was unable to control the despair clutching at her heart.

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"How much farther is it?" she demanded of the boy in the seat directly before her.

"It must be a matter of ten mile yet," he replied over his shoulder. Stolid as he was, his youth had caught the spirit of the grim contest and seemed to resent being forced to take his eyes from the road before them.

At his words a sort of sob came through the tightened lips of old Uncle Jastrow.

"'Deed, Lil' Miss, we can't make it!" he murmured.

"We must!" came April's unfaltering words. "We must make it!"

"It's bound to kill 'em!" the old darky answered.

"What are a dozen horses to the life of Marse Lee Hendon, Uncle Jastrow?" the girl replied firmly. "Faster! Faster!"

In that last ten miles of the journey, the horses, tiring rapidly, seemed to stumble at every step. The old colored man, driving with the skill he had learned from his father before him, kept his team on their feet and seemed to help them on step by step. Their labored breathing would have pained those who heard, had their errand been of less moment. But nothing could be spared if Lee Hendon's life was to be saved.

"Faster, Uncle Jastrow, faster!"

The words were almost continuous now as the horses staggered over the remaining miles and the sun dropped lower and lower.

"There's only three more miles now," the boy cried as they turned a corner. But the colored driver shook his head anxiously.

"They jes' cain't do it!" he said under his breath

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and to prove his words, one of the exhausted horses, stumbling, made a brave effort to keep its feet, but too weak, fell with a gasp and the carriage came to a sudden stop.

With a cry of distress April leaped to the ground. "Come with me!" she cried to the boy. "Show me the way. We'll run the rest of the distance. Hurry!"

But before they had well started a mounted man galloped around the bend and, with a shout, reined up beside them.

It was Val Tracy, coming to look for them, and with barely a word of greeting April thrust the order she had secured from Mr. Davis into his hand.

"Ride back, Val; read that on your way!" she commanded, and Tracy, knowing that there was not a moment to lose, glanced at the darkening sky and driving his spurs into his horse, tore back along the road he had come. In a moment he was out of sight.

April and Dorothea sitting on a fallen log beside the road waited while the slowly passing minutes marked the gathering shadows of the night. The sun had set long since, and at the moment of its setting the sound of a distant rifle shot sent a tremor of apprehension through the girls, but neither dared acknowledge she had heard it. Words were of no avail in that tense hour of agonized waiting. In the mind of each was the one question that banished all other thoughts until it should be answered.

"Had Val reached there in time?" They could not know until the young Captain returned, and so they waited in an agony of suspense.

Uncle Jastrow and the boy worked over the horses, which slowly recovered from their heart-breaking race; but the girls were scarcely conscious of what

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went on about them. Their ears were strained to catch the first sounds of a galloping horse coming back over the road by which Val had departed. And each heard the distant thud of hoofs at the same instant. Dorothea turned to April and in her eyes read the strain that well-nigh had broken her cousin's proud spirit.

But a moment later both had jumped to their feet in a feverish glow of hope. Two horses, not one, were coming swiftly toward them and soon, galloping around the bend in the road ahead, they saw a single horseman followed, ten yards behind, by another. In an instant they recognized Lee Hendon in the lead.

"April! April!" he shouted at the top of his voice and in the tone were notes of happiness and freedom.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

LOOSE ENDS

MRS. CHARLES STEWART had prophesied many times that when the Union soldiers came to little Washington they would subject the people of the town to all sorts of humiliation and suffering. And there were many who shared this belief. But when these dreaded Yankees appeared they took good care not to molest the citizens, and Mrs. Stewart decided finally that for the time being there was no need of her going to Brazil or Mexico.

With the Northern forces came a tall Union officer who very shortly after his arrival went to call at the Mays'. His visits were frequent, and in spite of the fact that he was an enemy, all of the May family came to have a respect for the quiet, gray-haired man who looked so earnestly and with such a longing gaze at Cousin Imogene. Dorothea had met him early one afternoon, coming up the drive, and bowed in acknowledgment of his salute as he reached her.

"I am looking for Miss Imogene Ivory," he said, with a note of eagerness in his voice. "Will you tell her please that General Stanchfield would be very glad to see her."

Dorothea made no effort to hide her surprise as she looked up at the big soldier and he, looking down, saw the question in her eyes.

"Are you wondering what has become of Larry?"

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he asked with a smile. "I think you must be the young lady who helped him to escape."

"I did what I could," Dorothea answered. "I hope your son is safe."

The General laughed.

"He isn't my son, you know," he replied. "Larry's my nephew, named after me, to be sure, and some say he looks like me. What do you think?"

"I think he does," Dorothea replied, a little embarrassed, and then she took him to Miss Imogene, with all sorts of romantic thoughts flying through her mind.

Some time after this Dorothea and Miss Imogene were sitting on the porch alone, talking of this or that, but usually coming back to the happy topic of the war's ending.

"I'm so glad it's over," Miss Imogene said thankfully. "Now the poor soldiers on both sides can go home and lead peaceful lives and stop hating each other. You know, honey," she went on, "I could never quite bring myself to hate the North. Perhaps the General had something to do with that," she added, with the daintiest of blushes.

"He's nice!" Dorothea declared. "But, Cousin Imogene, there's a mystery that I've never solved. You know that Mr. Stanchfield, the General's nephew, I mean, thought there was a Red String in this house. He was sure of it, in fact,— and so was I." She ended with a meaning look at her cousin.

"Do you really think so still, Dorothea?" Miss Imogene asked, looking up with a smile.

"Yes, I do," Dorothea answered. "I'm sure of it. At first I thought it was April, then I guessed it was Val Tracy, then I suspected even Lucy,— but

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now that the war's over and it won't make any difference I think you'd better confess."

"I, child! What do you mean?" demanded Miss Imogene.

"Why, aren't you a Red String?" Dorothea questioned.

"No, my dear, of course I'm not," Miss Imogene replied positively and Dorothea looked blankly at her for a moment or two, hardly able to believe her ears. "How could I be? I am a Southern gentlewoman."

"Well!" the girl exclaimed finally, "if it wasn't you, who could it have been?"

At that instant Harriot came out of the house and stopped a moment beside them.

"I'm so hungry. Field peas and hominy and bacon may fill you, but they aren't food!" she sighed, pushing back her hair, and Miss Imogene's sharp eyes saw a thin red string tied around one of her young niece's fingers.

"What's that for, honey?" she asked, and Dorothea, seeing the string, waited eagerly for the answer.

"Oh, that's just a string," Harriot answered. "Aunt Decent wears one to keep the misery out of her hands, and I thought I would see if it worked. I never had any misery and I don't want any. But don't you mention it to Aunt Decent. She's mighty touchy about it and doesn't like any one to notice it." With that Harriot ran off again and left the two gazing at each in surprised perplexity.

"Could it be Aunt Decent?" Dorothea whispered.

"It might be," Miss Imogene replied. "That old colored woman is a great power among the servants and she could be of a great deal of help to any one who needed it. I don't know what to think, and after all, honey, these Red Strings are very secret

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and we'll probably never know for sure. Perhaps there wasn't one about here at all."

"Mr. Stanchfield was so sure," Dorothea began, but here they were interrupted, and the subject was dropped.

That evening after Dorothea had gone to her room for the night there came a gentle knock at the door and she admitted Miss Imogene, who wore so radiant a smile that Dorothea gave her a hug before anything was said.

"I don't deserve it," Miss Imogene whispered, "but I shall be very happy. The General has asked me to marry him."

"I'm so glad!" exclaimed Dorothea, nestling close to the dear little lady. "And you do deserve to be happy. You try to make every one happy around you."

"That's sweet of you, honey," Miss Imogene murmured. "I can only think of one more thing to wish for. You remember young Larry Stanchfield, don't you?"

"To be sure," Dorothea answered, drawing back in her surprise. "I couldn't forget him."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," Miss Imogene said quickly, "because, my dear, it would be so nice if —" she hesitated an instant, "if some day you were my niece instead of my cousin."

Dorothea blushed.

"I'm afraid, Cousin Imogene, I can't be that, unless — unless you adopt Val Tracy for a nephew. You see," Dorothea went on hurriedly, "Val and I were both mixed up. He thought I was in love with Larry Stanchfield, and that's the reason he saved him that time, though an Irishman, of course, hates an informer above anything. And I thought he was in love with April; but he wasn't, and — well, it all

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came out that day we rescued Lee Hendon, and — and I'm all mixed up, too, about what I'll be when I marry Val; because now I'm half English and half American, and then I'll be Irish too, I suppose."

"No, my dear," Miss Imogene replied as she took the girl in her arms. "You'll be all American, both of you. Now that our country is to be united again we can take in all the nationalities, and the Irish, honey, make very good Americans! I think we'll have to arrange for a double wedding? What do think?"

"I think it would be lovely!" replied Dorothea.

THE END

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